ISSUE NINETY-FIVE

UK: £2.80 US: $6.00 Canada: $7.00

Doctor Who In-Vision

SEASON 24 OVERVIEW

THE MAKING OF A TELEVISION DRAMA SERIES

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Cover: Steve Caldwell
Icons: Chris Senior
Format: Justin Richards, Peter Anghelides, June 1986
Doctor Who © BBC Television 1986, 2001
Origination: GLA Productions
Printers: Brimsden Colour
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Subscriptions: 8 issues for £26.30 (UK only; add £3.20 for mailing in card envelopes); USA/Canada £36/$54; Australasia £40.

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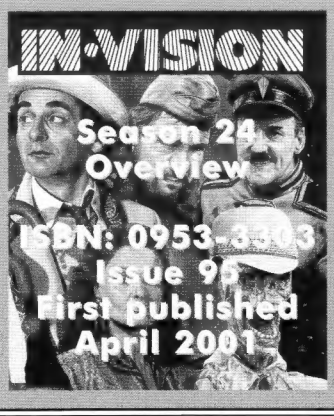

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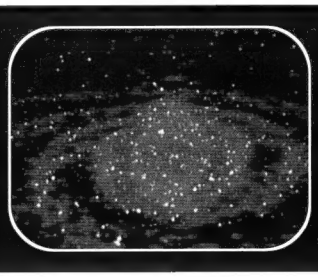
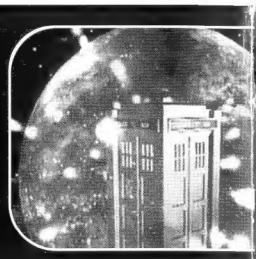
WHO DAF





WHEN DOCTOR WHO returns in September for its 24th series, it will introduce yet another actor in the title role, and a Nineties feel with a computer-generated title sequence. These are the 11th titles in the programme's 24-year history, and at 50 seconds it is also the longest sequence. There are 1,200 frames from beginning to end.

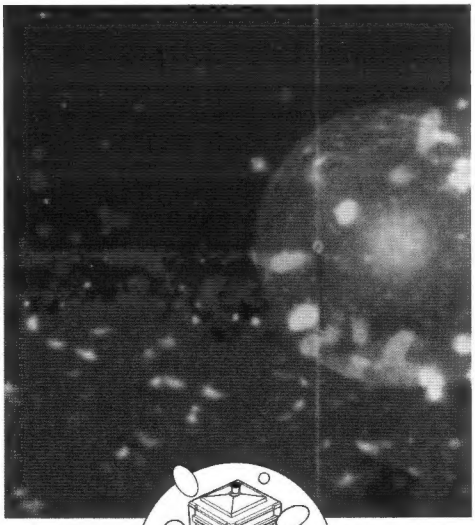
Since the early days when Bernard Lodge designed the original black and white graphics using a technique called "howl-around" (where the camera looks at the monitor showing the camera output), the titles have been an integral part of the programme, setting the scene for the adventure of our intrepid time and space traveller. Lodge's titles were replaced by the slit-scan technique used in *2001 A Space Odyssey*.

The new sequence was storyboarded by BBC graphics designer Oliver Elms, and animated out-of-house at CAL by Gareth Edwards. All the animation and rendering was done on a variety of systems: Sun micro-system (each person at CAL has a Sun workstation, allowing him to use several at once) and Iris. Edwards says: "For some of the end work, I hadn't translated some of the special effects software from what we call assembly language into a language that can be read by computer, so I just did those particular frames on the Vax. So we used everything."

John Nathan Turner, **Doctor Who** producer for eight years, felt it was time for a change: "Because **Doctor Who** has been running for so long it was necessary to keep up with the times. I think it's succeeded for so long because it has continually progressed." Computer graphics were the logical step forward.

The two ingredients Nathan Turner said the new sequence had to include were the Doctor's face and the TARDIS. But there was more to it than that. Edwards' brief from the BBC insisted on two additional factors. "It had to have the correct emotional content for **Doctor Who**. It's not exactly light entertainment, but drama and science fiction, and had to have that **Doctor Who** quality," says Edwards. The other requirement was equally intangible: Elms insisted the titles had to have a roller coaster effect. It took Edwards about a week to crack this, he estimates. Now the first half – 520 frames of the sequence – is upside-down.

The finished solid model graphics open looking in on a spiralling galaxy of stars. As the "camera" moves 'in' to focus on Earth, the Doctor's time machine, the TARDIS, spins into



vents in the broadcasting industry, mputer-generated title sequence was being erview with GARETH EDWARDS of CAL VIDEO ication titled, ironically, 'Invision'. 13-years phemeral cousin by this reprint of...

RES CHANGE

view heading towards Earth. It is at this point that "the world flips round and as we go over the top of the TARDIS, we actually go through 180 degrees to find ourselves the right way up with the TARDIS floating above," Edwards explains.

The inspiration came from a sequence Edwards had done two years before for *A Comet Called Halley.* It was this, says Edwards, which convinced Elms to explore computer graphics for the first time. What convinced Edwards the job was right was the filmic quality of some of the storyboard elements. "I'm very keen on achieving this ability to make pictures with a computer without worrying that there's a computer involved; it's just another tool for making pictures," he says.

Edwards is insistent that the finished effect is not overtly computer graphics. The stars – all 50,000 of them – for example, could have been created by any number of methods, he says; the advantage of using a computer was speed.

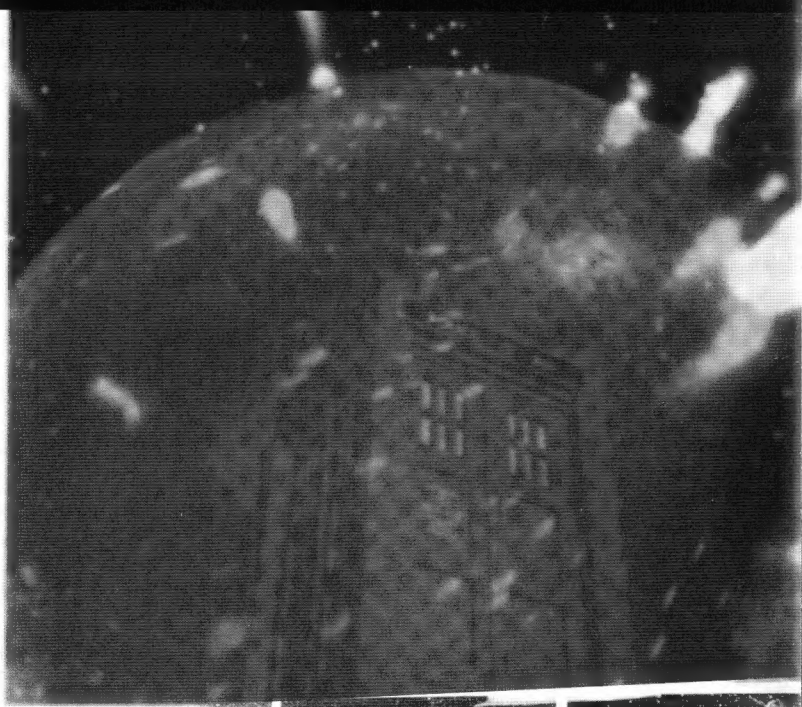
Once the information for each star – each can have an individual colour, transparency, size, and be elevated separately – was fed into the renderer, the most complicated part was getting a fast enough feed-back rate. Edwards used different renderers for each specific job, each specially "tweaked" to do its function as fast as possible. Even the glows round the TARDIS had their own special renderer.

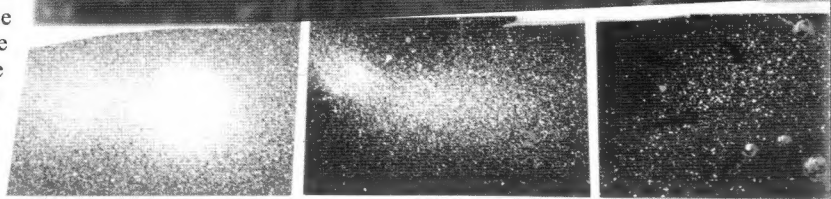
Because of the number of renderers at one stage there were 10 layers of composites being merged, at the point when the sequence is spinning round the TARDIS. So successfully has Edwards created the starfield and TARDIS images that Nathan-Turner, who says he is "delighted" with the results, plans to use them as inserts into the programme itself at some stage. Although not a primary consideration, Nathan-Turner insists, this is one of the advantages of having a computer-generated sequence that can be relatively easily changed. For example, in the event of another change of actor in the title role, the Doctor's face which appears towards the end of the sequence can be switched.

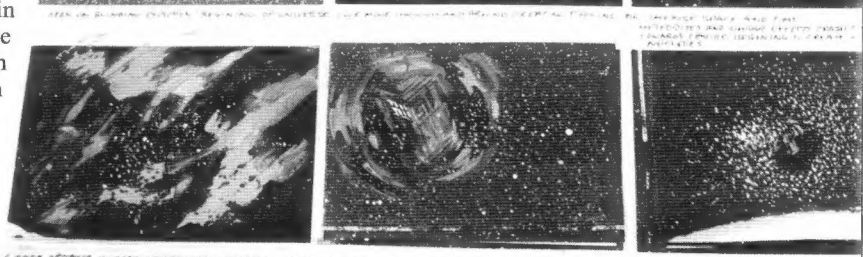
Because of the length of the sequence Edwards was keen to find something to give it continuity. The galaxy, based loosely on the Milky Way, was an attempt to give the sequence an anchor, or reference point for the viewer. "It is extremely difficult to keep the sense of continuity and momentum going when animating a single movement animation. The more props you can use to help this the better," Edwards explains.

One device was to overlay each section so that each element leads into the next. "It's like a relay race," says Edwards. "We see the TARDIS before flying under the galaxy, we see the Doctor's face before losing the TARDIS, and we see the end logo before losing the explosion at the end."

The one thing that is still familiar in the titles is the music, although that too has been updated. Composer Keff McCullough makes his TV debut with an adaptation of the **Doctor Who** theme and incidental music throughout the series.



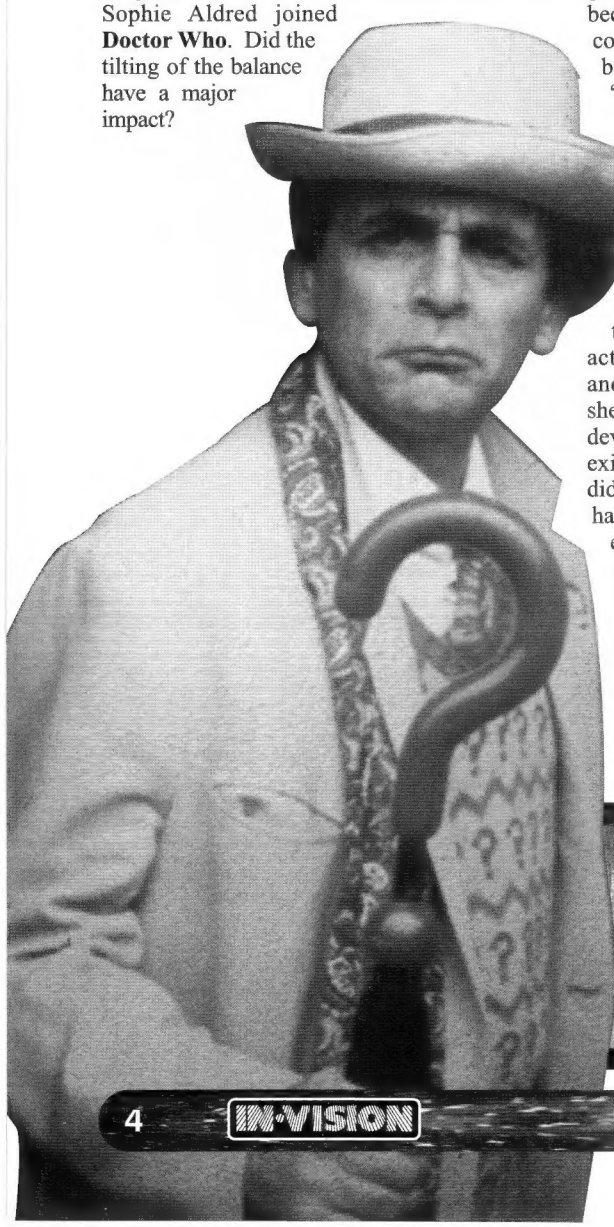




Continuing his interview with JEREMY BENTHAM from IN•VISION 91, seventh Doctor actor SYLVESTER McCOY recounts how he stopped worrying and learned to love the role he had won in 1987. From lightweight beginnings he found new depths in the part and convinced himself that three seasons were just not enough...

SLY'D RULER

"IT CAN BE very important sometimes" muses McCoy, pondering a question about how important the mix of fellow actors can be to a successful series of performances. Having begun with a highly accomplished troubadour like Bonnie Langford, there was suddenly a great shift when television newcomer Sophie Aldred joined **Doctor Who**. Did the tilting of the balance have a major impact?



"It depends on the job as well. I've done lots of those number one tours – plays all around Britain where you go to somewhere like Manchester for a week, Glasgow, Edinburgh, etceteras – and you become part of a very enclosed community. A sort of travelling gypsy group of actors and backstage staff. There it becomes very important that you get a social cohesion, because if it goes wrong then it can become really horrible.

"It did once happen to me. Initially I was having an absolute ball, but there was this actress – a Scottish lady whose name I won't mention – and she was utterly extraordinary in that she actually liked to stir things. She really enjoyed turning one actor against another. And she did it in such a devious way; the sort of way I thought only ever existed in Shakespearean tragedies. I honestly didn't realise until that moment that such things happened in real life, and it was a horrible experience. By the end of the tour everybody was hating everybody else and all because of one little person who was poisoning the atmosphere.

"I had worked with Bonnie for a year before, doing the operetta *The Pirates of Penzance*. We got married to each other every night, twice on Saturdays. After all that it was great to work with her on **Doctor Who** because she represented someone that I knew and could relax with.

"The problem with Bonnie's character, I think, is that she was brought in to stand up against Colin's coat! She had to be vague and somewhat bland just to compete against this extraordinary mass of riotous clothing. So Bonnie was very suited to being a companion of the sixth Doctor, perhaps less so when I came along and played the role quite differently."

So did that mean that different Doctors dictate the need for different traits in their companions?

"Yes I think it does, and you could feel it in the acting during my first year on the show. Bonnie was so loud and 'up there', while I was further down the ladder worrying about developing my character. So when Sophie arrived we were more or less on the same plane. Performance is all about how you listen and respond to the other player. It's a bit like a tennis game insofar as how the other person plays back the line will determine how you move things forward and keep the ball in the air all the time. Bonnie's way of passing a line was different to Sophie's, so I tended to respond at a different level as well.

"Bonnie was very suited to being a companion of the sixth Doctor, perhaps less so when I came along and played the role quite differently"

"It's probably fair to say that Sophie's way of acting was more in tune with my way of doing it, and coupled with that, she was looking to me to guide her somewhat as this was her first job

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in television. And it helped that we got on incredibly well right from the start. She laughed at all of my jokes, which I suppose showed that we had the same sense of humour. Sophie was also very down-to-earth and terribly 'un-starry', which suited me because I'm not so much a theatrical actor. I'd never gone to drama school and my early years were very strange and wonderful in that my stages tended to be working men's clubs, pubs and the like, so you got no opportunities to develop any airs and graces. If you try to be 'luvvy' in a social club, someone will throw a pint of beer at you! There was no way I could ever have sheltered behind that fourth wall of the theatre and become an 'actor chappie'. I've often wanted to be an 'actor chappie', but I can't because I just don't have that experience.

"Sophie likewise had never been to drama school, but she had gone to university and studied drama there. She too was very down-to-earth and non-theatrical, so that was the source of the bond that grew between us."

Previous Doctors, such as Colin Baker and Jon Pertwee, have recalled how important it was to them to be seen as the leading man figure, welcoming guest actors to the cast with that certain level of statesman-like bonhomie so common to theatrical managers. Was that ever a problem for so down-to-earth a person as Sylvester McCoy, particularly when faced with actors with longer term theatrical pedigrees?

"It never became an issue because right from the start I determined that whoever was going to come on our series was going to have a very good time. They'd be welcomed as guests because fundamentally that is what they were. I always had this vision of a scene I remember from an old **Tarzan** film where Tarzan is sat at the table of this great lord's house. Suddenly he picks up this plate of soup and just tips it down his throat, so, of course, the lord of the house has to do exactly the same by way of demonstrating good manners. That is sort of what we always wanted to do. If anyone came onto our set and they had a particular way of performing, then we would join in and do it that way too. And also I knew that, because I was playing **Doctor Who**, they'd always have to cut to me anyway.

"The third season turned out much more like the way I wanted to do Doctor Who, so I thought I'd quite like to do another year after all."

"There were certain actors who came in saddled with a lot of theatrical baggage who insisted upon being up front and centre stage all the time. And we'd go along with it and say, 'Yeah, no problem, let's do it that way…' And then we'd just quietly do what we'd always done, knowing that the cameras would be cutting to us. But that made these actors very happy, and then they became very amenable, and then they'd drop this front that they put up.

"A lot of actors are incredibly shy, which is why they put up these enormous barriers between themselves and others, and when we made them feel more relaxed, they'd really start to enjoy themselves and you'd get a better show. I know without doubt that many of these great actors that we worked with talk now about being on **Doctor Who** with great affection. Nicholas Parsons loved it. Ken Dodd, who I saw recently, did **Alice in Wonderland** on telly not so long ago, and he said he based his character on me. The only thing is, the character he played was Mr Rat…"

During his tenure at the BBC, Michael Grade reportedly established a guideline that **Doctor Who** actors should do three seasons in the part and no more. Although Sylvester McCoy's decision was ultimately made for him, would he have done a year four if asked, based on how his character had matured by 1989?

"It had gone through my mind originally that I would finish after the third season, but then, when John Nathan-Turner came up to my agent and myself and said, "Right, we want you for a third season but we also want you to sign for a fourth season as well." I was a bit nervous at first about committing to a year longer than I wanted to. But, when the third season turned out much more like the way I wanted to do **Doctor Who**, I thought I'd quite like to do another year after all."

In the event, McCoy's return to the series was delayed some seven years, and when he did return it was principally so that he could hand over the front door TARDIS key to Doctor number eight. Were there any regrets at so brief a parting?

"Not really. The Producer, Philip Segal, was actually quite in awe of **Doctor Who** and that was just great. He just said, "There's the costume, there's the set. Go do your stuff." As well, because I was older and, some would say, more mature, I found I was much more relaxed in the part. I don't remember it being a conscious attitude, there was just much less in the way of pressures to complete the episode that you could concentrate more on what you had to do. On the BBC series the pressure was amazing, and that always added a touch of freneticism to making it. Suddenly that pressure was off and I also had no responsibilities, as that torch had been passed to Paul McGann. The added maturity of years probably helped me the most, especially as I have always believed the Doctor should be a more mature person."

And was McCoy's friendship with McGann as solid as journalists would have the public believe?

"Yes, because I knew Paul before he got the part. I'd known the McGann brothers for several years and we'd sometimes meet up for a few drinks. Once he'd landed the part he did ask me a few questions about **Doctor Who**, but mainly to do with the conventions – I can only suppose I really put him off. He is naturally a very shy person. He's that kind of actor who just doesn't like to interact directly with the public in huge numbers.

"It is true that in the early days of him getting the role, he said he would do a convention if I 'held his hand' and did it with him. But since then he has always stayed remarkably busy, and therefore I think the window of opportunity has largely passed by now. If we could have got him early, and got him young, then it would have been feasible. But now that he's sort of become the George Lazenby of **Doctor Who**, and had a career that has been celebrated everywhere else, he sort of feels like the mountain-climber who set off for the peak but didn't even make it to the foothills. A bit like my Doctor really…"

"Yes. That's right. You're going. You've been gone for ages. Already gone. You're still here. Just arrived. Haven't even met you yet. Depends on who you are and how you look at it. Strange business, Time."

CONTRADICTORY COMPANION

Craig Hinton looks back on the rights and wrongs of Mel Bush, the companion who might not even exist and who many fans were glad to see go — but who has been rehabilitated ten years after her departure from the series

AT THE END of Season 24's DRAGONFIRE, Melanie Bush takes her leave of the Doctor. Does she die? Does she marry or fall in love? Does the Doctor decide to throw her out? No. In one of the most unbelievable companion exits the series has ever seen (barring Peri becoming a warrior queen/wrestling manager, of course), sweet, innocent fitness fanatic Mel decides to escape the cosy confines of the TARDIS to travel around the galaxy in the company of Sabalom Glitz, **Doctor Who**'s equivalent of a dirty old man. It's not even clear whether the Doctor has actually met her in the first place – she could very well be a confusing temporal paradox.

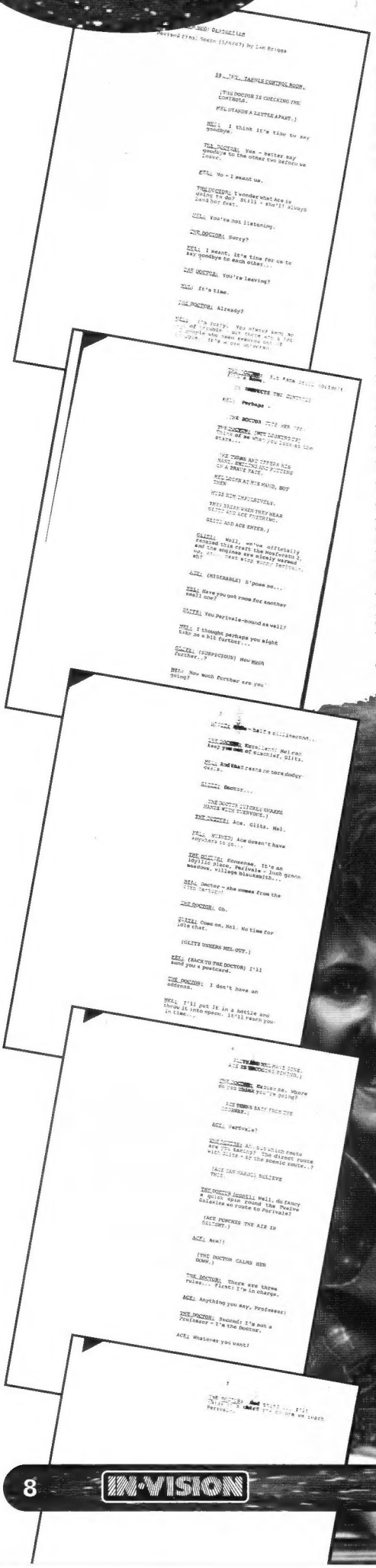
Behind the scenes, the reasons for the exit are more straightforward: Bonnie Langford wanted to leave, and the production team had been trying out new female companions throughout Season 24, in preparation for a darker take on the Doctor. Finally settling on Sophie Aldred's character, Ace was to join and Mel was to leave. But behind-the-scenes rationality is no reason for such a ham-fisted exit. But then again, Melanie Bush had a dodgy introduction as well, both on-screen and off-screen.

The decision to cast former child star Bonnie Langford as a companion was met with a decidedly mixed reception back in 1986. Bringing such a high-profile personality to **Doctor Who** was always going to be a risky move: there is a huge difference between a famous guest star who stays for a story (qv Ken Dodd) and a companion who is there for the long-haul. In fan quarters, there was a growing groundswell of opinion that John Nathan-Turner, once seen as the series' saviour, was going too far down the pantomime/light entertainment route – not helped by his comparison of **Doctor Who** with the **Morecambe and Wise Show**. Publicity shots of Bonnie Langford in her pantomime Peter Pan outfit, Kirby-wiring away with Colin Baker, did nothing to dispel this.

There is no doubting that Langford is a consummate performer: an outstanding singer and dancer capable of holding an audience in the palm of her hand. Unfortunately, in the public eye of the 1980s, her acting talent was firmly rooted in her role as the lisping Violet Elizabeth Bott ("I'll scream and scream…") in ITV's **Just William** series in the 70s. Just as Colin Baker's desire to play his Doctor as a dark-suited brooding presence was overruled by the production office, any wish by Ms Langford to break free of her child-star image went out of the window: that wasn't what was wanted.

John Nathan-Turner's brief for Mel was exactly that. Brief. He established that she came from the quiet town of Pease Pottage in Sussex, and was a computer genius and fitness fanatic. He also stated that she joined the Doctor after he thwarted another of the Master's schemes. Perhaps if Season 23 had gone ahead as planned, we would have seen this story with the Master, although his mooted presence in the season's proposed Auton story mitigates against this. John Nathan-Turner had also made a conscious decision to move away from the stronger female companions such as Tegan and Peri, and return to one of the series' mainstays: the screamer. Unfortunately, because Langford was enshrined in the public imagination as exactly that, the public and fandom ignored those aspects of Mel's character, in which she was given the chance to actually act, and focussed on the negative aspects of the character. What made it worse was that in the mid-80s, female roles on television (and in real life) had undergone something of a sea-change. Strong female roles such as the cast of BBC's **Tenko** and the power-dressing Alexis in **Dynasty** were becoming common, and Britain was now ruled by the Iron Lady: the screaming little girl had no place in the new "greed is good" culture that Thatcher was fostering. Directors that chose to confuse Bonnie Langford (the screaming child-star) with Melanie Bush didn't help, either.

It does have to be said that creating an out-and-out screamer was actually a fairly logical move.. Sarah-Jane, Leela, Tegan and Peri – even Liz Shaw – all began as "Strong Women"™, only to descend into the **Doctor Who** stereotype at the drop of a Dalek. Although the description is nothing short of misogynistic, John Nathan-Turner's brief says that "Melanie is one of those annoying young ladies who is a



'feminist' at all times, except at moments of great stress, when she relies heavily on playing the hard-done-by, down-trodden, crocodile-teared female."

Thankfully, Langford managed to convert this into the similar but far more sympathetic "pretends to be brave and confident, can be brave and confident, but isn't afraid to scream herself silly". In her "introductory story", Langford was even told at which musical note to scream when the Vervoids hatch, so that it matched the scream into the closing theme!

Ah. Introductory story. That's where the problems start. Because of the hiatus, the original Season 23 – Celestial Toymaker, Ice Warriors and Autons, et al – was dropped in favour of a self-referential trial-based series. It would have been possible to show Mel's introduction as one of the two "past" stories, but at the cost of writing out Peri earlier in the season. So it was decided to introduce Mel *after* she had joined the Doctor. Thankfully, Colin Baker and Langford were able to bring out the feeling that these two had been travelling together for some time, but it also meant that when Mel was hijacked by the Master to undermine the Valeyard's defence, the "in continuity" Doctor hadn't met her. Not a problem if the Time Lords had performed their usual trick of wiping a companion's memory and putting them back where they came from, but they didn't. Mel leaves with the Doctor… even though he hasn't met her yet. Furthermore, Mel's ignorance of the Master completely invalidates her origin story… But more of that later.

"Between the Doctor and Mel leaving the space station and the regeneration, Doctor Who is an open book: anything could have happened."

The fitness fanatic side of her character is apparent from her first scene: she has turned the Doctor vegetarian (shades of his closing lines from THE TWO DOCTORS) and got him on an exercise bike. While this is good for a cheap laugh (Colin Baker had a quite public fight with his weight, played out in the tabloid press), scratch the surface of this and it is complete nonsense. As I had the Doctor later say in the novel *Millennial Rites*, "as if a Time Lord has to worry about cholesterol levels!" After the Doctor's regeneration, however, it becomes rather difficult for Mel to criticise the more slim-line seventh Doctor, and this aspect of her character is effectively dropped. However, her bravery is apparent from day one as well. She is quite willing to enter the air ducts on the Hyperion III in TERROR OF THE VERVOIDS, while in TIME AND THE RANI, she searches for the Doctor despite being terrified by the Tetraps (I suppose someone had to be).

A lot of this has to spring from Langford's enthusiasm for the character: we all know or know of gung-ho people like that.

The character trait that was handled the worst on-screen was that she was supposed to be a computer genius. Her recognition of the Valeyard's megabyte modem (with the ludicrous implication that the Matrix is nothing more than a contemporary computer – does BT offer broadband to Gallifrey?) was shoe-horned in without subtlety, yet John Nathan-Turner's brief also states that she cannot pilot the TARDIS. Why not? Even Leela and Tegan gave it a stab! Mel also has an excellent – if not photographic – memory. "Like an elephant," according to the Doctor. Of course, like Zoe, a photographic memory is only of use if you remember to put the film in…

Perhaps Mel's most endearing quality – and the one that got her into the most trouble – was her helpfulness and willingness to trust people. She trusts the Rezzies in PARADISE TOWERS, only to almost end up as lunch. In the same story, she is determined to help Pex overcome his cowardice, and her excuse for leaving the Doctor is that someone needs to keep an eye on Glitz. She also has a habit of speaking her mind, thinking that she is helping without realising that her tactlessness is making matters worse.

With so little information shown on-screen and her back story up for grabs, it was inevitable that the writers of Virgin's **New** and **Missing Adventures** would seek to plug this gap – and plug it they did. Or should I say, *we* did, given that I have written two novels featuring the sixth Doctor and Mel, and she appears or is mentioned in a large number of other books, as well as two Big Finish Audio productions. I am often asked why I chose to write for this pairing in both *Millennial Rites* and *The Quantum Archangel*, given that they are hardly the most popular characters in the series. One reason is simple: *because* they aren't that popular. I wanted to explore the relationship between the sixth Doctor – a *bon viveur*, arrogant, high-handed, rude – and Mel, one of the most innocent companions since Victoria. But there was another factor which made this an inviting prospect. Between the Doctor and Mel leaving the Time Lord space station and the Doctor's regeneration, **Doctor Who** is an open book: anything could have happened. After TIME AND THE RANI, Mel makes a few references to off-screen adventures after TRIAL OF A TIME LORD, but there is a lot of freedom for authors to play around and develop both characters without contradiction. With the **New Adventures** authors pushing forward Season 25 and 26's idea of the seventh Doctor being "more than just a Time Lord" and "Time's Champion", and the roots of this development almost certainly occurring during this gap, the opportunity for character development and interaction with the sixth Doctor was irresistible.

For example, I wanted to explore the Doctor's fear of becoming the Valeyard: if he hasn't met Mel, then perhaps that future won't happen. So how does he feel when he eventually meets her? How will he cope with a companion who represents his descent into his darker side?

In this gap, we have to assume (as shown in the final chapter of Pip and Jane Baker's novelisation of THE ULTIMATE FOE) that the sixth Doctor actually did return Mel to her correct point in space and time – the point at which the Master abducted her. From Steve Lyons' novels *Time of Your Life* and *Killing Ground*, we know that the Doctor is terrified that if he meets Mel, it will be the first step on his evolution into the Valeyard. The Doctor has other companions

– the short-lived Angela and Grant (from Steve Lyons' books) as well as Evelyn Smythe (Big Finish and the upcoming Gary Russell novel *Instruments of Darkness*) and the shape-changing Whifferdill Frobisher from the Marvel comic strip, among others – but eventually he is incapable of bucking destiny and does meets Mel.

Her origin story – helping the Doctor defeat the Master, which is also mentioned in *Millennial Rites* – is actually shown in Russell's *Business Unusual*: the Doctor has already defeated the Master and his Usurian allies; he needs a computer programmer to clear up the mess – and is horrified to discover that it is Mel, thus satisfying both the origin story and her unfamiliarity with the Master in TRIAL... We also learn of her parents (Christine and Alan Bush).

In my own *Millennial Rites*, much is made of her seeing the best in people, and she is more than capable of hacking into a highly secure computer network. Indeed, we learn that she was offered jobs with IBM, I^2 (from Justin Richards' novel *System Shock*) and ACL (the company owned by the villain of the piece). In a reshaped reality, she is the fair and benevolent ruler of a magical kingdom.

In *The Quantum Archangel*, Mel leaves the Doctor at the beginning of the book, after his miscalculation has led to the destruction of an entire planet and its people. Mel simply cannot cope with this amount of blood on his hands, and even at the end of the book, where the situation has been resolved, it is clear that her trust in the Doctor has been severely strained. We also see Mel in a parallel universe designed to give her what she wants: is it any surprise that she is Prime Minister of Britain? By this time, TERROR OF THE VERVOIDS has happened, so the sixth Doctor is also much further down his own dark path.

Mel's last chronological appearance in Steve Lyons' *Head Games* has a very different take on her character – but it is the end result of a logical progression. She has left Glitz and is finally making her way back to Earth in the early 21st century, but this isn't the same Mel from DRAGONFIRE. She is extremely bitter, especially when the seventh Doctor informs her that she was one of the mistakes he made in his previous incarnation (a running theme in the **New Adventures** is that the Doctor sacrificed his sixth Incarnation to become the more powerful, more influential Time's Champion, and also because he was the weak link which would lead to the Valeyard). He also tells Mel that she left because he had implanted a telepathic command in her mind which he triggered when he met Ace, who he needed as part of his new crusade.

In a way, this mirrors reality. With script editor Andrew Cartmel's plans for the seventh Doctor – darker, more manipulative – there really would have been no place for Mel in the series. *Head Games* and *The Quantum Archangel* show how Mel is incapable of coping with the Doctor's view of the "bigger picture", and the programme needed someone like Ace who, on the surface at least, would be able to act as the proper foil without constantly trying to claim the high moral ground.

The books and audios have shown that there was so much wasted opportunity with Mel's character. Her broadbrush character traits have been honed and refined, her relationship with both the sixth and seventh Doctors has been given depth and believability. Even her unlikely exit has been explained away. In hindsight, it is fair to say that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with Mel as a companion: John Nathan-Turner had simply chosen to go back to basics – Susan, Vicki, Victoria and particularly Polly. Unfortunately, Bonnie Langford came with far too much (unwarranted) baggage, a succession of directors choosing to relegate her to a walking scream, and a public living in a time of power-dressing and strong female roles. In the Big Finish seventh Doctor and Mel story *Fires of Vulcan*, Langford demonstrates what can be done with good direction, a good script, and an actor being allowed to play the role as she wanted to. But without these factors, and in the 80s, the public simply couldn't take to the well-meaning but screaming Melanie Jane Bush.

For more information about Mel, check out Alden Bates' excellent Melanie Bush website: http://www.tetrap.com/drwho/mel/index.shtml

On the Day She Was Born...

Just after completing Season 23, Bonnie Langford appeared on the BBC Radio programme On the Day I was Born, a Desert Island Discs-like interview focused on the news and music guest's birthday – in this case July 22nd 1964, when A Hard Day's Night was top of the charts and the Beatles had made a triumphant return to Liverpool. Here's some of what Langford had to say.

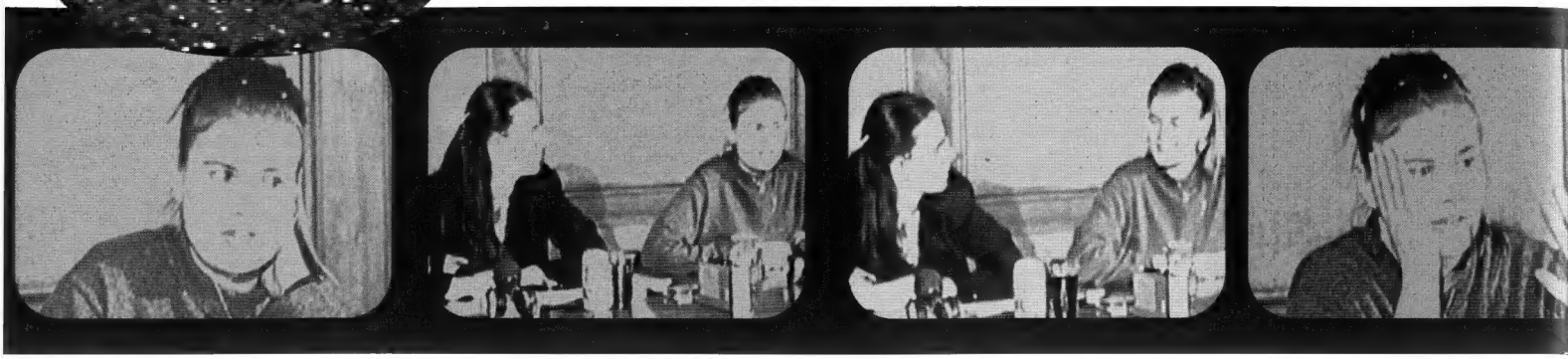
"For me it's strange that it was happening as I was born. I know all the Beatles' songs and love them all, but it seems to be in the past. Beatles fans were screaming for them at the time, and Langford has been a fan like that herself. "I remember going to an Osmonds concert. But I remember it must have been very frightening being part of a big crowd like that, because I would get claustrophobic. It would be nice to meet the people at those concerts a few days later and see if they had any voice left at all."

Unemployment had just dropped below 300,000 in July 1964. "It's weird, but they are relatively small pieces in the paper. I'm sure that now it would be more prominent, now there are more than three million unemployed. Another nought – it's a sad situation and a very complicated one.

And did she have personal experience of unemployment? "Yes, I have, but I've always had something on the horizon to look forward to and I appreciate very much the luck that I've had and am every aware that there may be rainy days to come. That's why I'm very glad my parents made it clear that it wasn't a secure path I was going to tread and I had to have qualifications to fall back on. And I think everybody should have that."

"I get a tremendous amount of letters from younger people who are still at school and want to go into showbusiness.. And obviously I read them very carefully because I realise what I say they will probably take heed of and I don't want to put them on the wrong track or lead them into false hopes. Or also to dampen their hopes. But I can't stress enough the downs and disappointments of my line of business. There's more unemployment than there is employment." And is she qualified to become the Doctor's new assistant? "But I don't have a qualification in computer programming and that's the character I play… it's a computer programmer from Pease Pottage in Sussex, and her name is Melanie Bush and she travels with the Doctor. I have in fact completed it now and enjoyed it immensely, it's strange being in a series that's been going longer than I have been alive…"

NEWCOMER
SOPHIE ALDRED



ACE'S HIGH

On 5 March 1988, in between finishing work on DRAGONFIRE and starting work on Season 25, the Doctor's newest companion, SOPHIE ALDRED, attended one of her first conventions: ICSF's Chaos Con, held at the Imperial College's Student Union building next to the Albert Hall, where she was interviewed by IN•VISION reviewer KATE BROWN about her thoughts about her first role in television – and where it might lead...

YOUR CHARACTER'S *real name was the same as the girl in* The Wizard of Oz, *wasn't it? Dorothy?*

That's right. Ian Briggs, a big movie fan, gave Ace her real name. He gave me a good luck card on my first studio date, and on the card was a picture of Judy Garland from *The Wizard of Oz*, holding a little dog in her arms. Originally I was going to have a dog, a soft toy named Wayne, but stuffed with Nitro-Nine instead of padding. There was a scene where Glitz was going to come into Ace's quarters and be surprised by Kane. He picks up the nearest thing to hand to throw at him, which happens to be Wayne, just as the zombie, Pudovkin comes in as well. Full of frustration Glitz throws the stuffed dog anyway, which then blows up, killing Pudovkin. But they didn't keep that scene in the final scripts.

So does Ace now want to go home, like Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz*?*

No way. She's going to have a good time!

How do you see the character progressing?

Well I hope it does progress, and from the script I've just been given for the first story of this season, I'm very pleased with the way the writers have taken all the suggestions to heart. I was a bit worried at first that Ace was just going to become a character that would just go, "Ace! Mega! Wicked! Wicked! Mega!" the whole time, but thank goodness that hasn't happened. And in fact I think there's only one "Wicked" in the whole story. I'm very pleased too by the way Andrew Cartmel, in particular, has taken my suggestions up and consulted Ian Briggs a lot, because Ian, I think, believes Ace is, to a large extent, his baby and so it's right they work together on developing her. Ben Aaronovitch, the new writer, has taken the trouble to get to know me, and so he's been able to put more of me into Ace. At first you sense Ace could have been written for any old actress, but now it's being written for me.

Is that the way round it should be done, considering that Bonnie Langford was cast because she's Bonnie Langford, and Mel never really developed as a character?

That's definitely true. I think Bonnie felt slightly disillusioned by the fact she hadn't really been given a role. I think if she had done she would have done it very well, and I know that's what she was looking for when she decided to go into **Doctor Who**. It was a shame she was used purely as Bonnie Langford rather than as Mel. That is, perhaps, the difficulty with casting a well known person into a role like that, so obviously it won't happen with me because I'm an unknown.

So does Ace now want to go home, like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*? No way. She's going to have a good time!

And is Ian writing a story for next season?

No, although Ian is around. Ian has become a good friend of mine and, in fact, he rang me up last week to invite me to go to a youth theatre production and to see again the three girls he based my character around. Ace is based on three real teenage girls who live in Perivale and who are all quite rebellious. I was lucky enough to meet two of them in the studio, and so I leapt at this chance because to have contact with the people your role is based around can only be a good thing for the future.

I understand the story of the art room exploding is true as well...

Yes it is. The girl that bit was based on, Joanne, said to me she'd done an experiment that had gone wrong and she'd blown up large chunks of the art room by accident. I had a great letter from her a few weeks ago telling me all about her ambitions, and how she wants to be an RAF pilot. She's determined to do it even though all her friends think she's mad. "If I've got to die" she said, "I'd rather die bravely!" which I think is so wonderful. That's great research for Ace, I think.

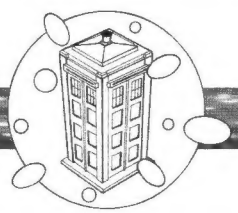
Do you think Ace will keep this habit of hers of giving everyone nicknames, like "Bilge-bag" and "Doughnut"? Where did all this originate from?

That was completely Ian, and it was all in the original script. It was kind of ironic to call Bonnie "Doughnut", because she is so skinny and as I'm much larger you'd expect her to be calling me "Fatty" or something like that.

You don't think you'll ever become a screamer, do you?

I hope not. The writers are very adamant about that. They found it quite a challenge to write a part for a strong woman, but in a lot of ways times have changed over the last few years as regards attitudes to women and writing for women on television. Right from the start Andrew has taken the trouble to introduce me to all the writers – we've been out for lunch and they've bothered to find out what I'm like, and I think they realise I'm not the kind of person who screams easily. I was a bit worried when I was watching DRAGONFIRE and it came to the scene where Kane is with me and he's taking his gloves off. I remember desperately thinking, "Oh no, I didn't scream here, did I?" I didn't realise then what a big thing it would become that Ace shouldn't scream, but looking at it I'm glad to say I just about got away with it.

How old were you when you started watching ***Doctor Who?***



I can't remember precisely how old I was, but I must have started watching Patrick Troughton, although my Doctors were mainly Jon Pertwee and Tom Baker. My mother stopped me watching it for a large chunk of time because I was so frightened by the Cybermen. I actually had nightmares. Having said that, I've got a hopeless long term memory so I can't recall any single stories, only how I felt at the time and what the atmosphere was like. Whenever I hear the old music and see the old titles, that feeling of fear does come back. I was down at the exhibition near Salisbury the other week and this Dalek trundled up to me squawking "Approach. Approach". And just for a split second I freaked out inside because it brought back those terrors I had as a child.

Are you looking forward to doing a Dalek or a Cybermen story?

Yes to the first, not so sure about the second until I'm sure I've got over my psychological terror of Cybermen.

Would you describe yourself as a Doctor Who fan?

Not in the sense of ever wanting to join a club. I've got into it more since I've started watching a lot of the older episodes. Once I'd started doing A-levels, and then after I went away to university, Drama intervened and I was doing plays whenever **Doctor Who** was on. Also you have to remember I was a poor student so we couldn't afford a TV.

But you were keen on the Gerry Anderson series?

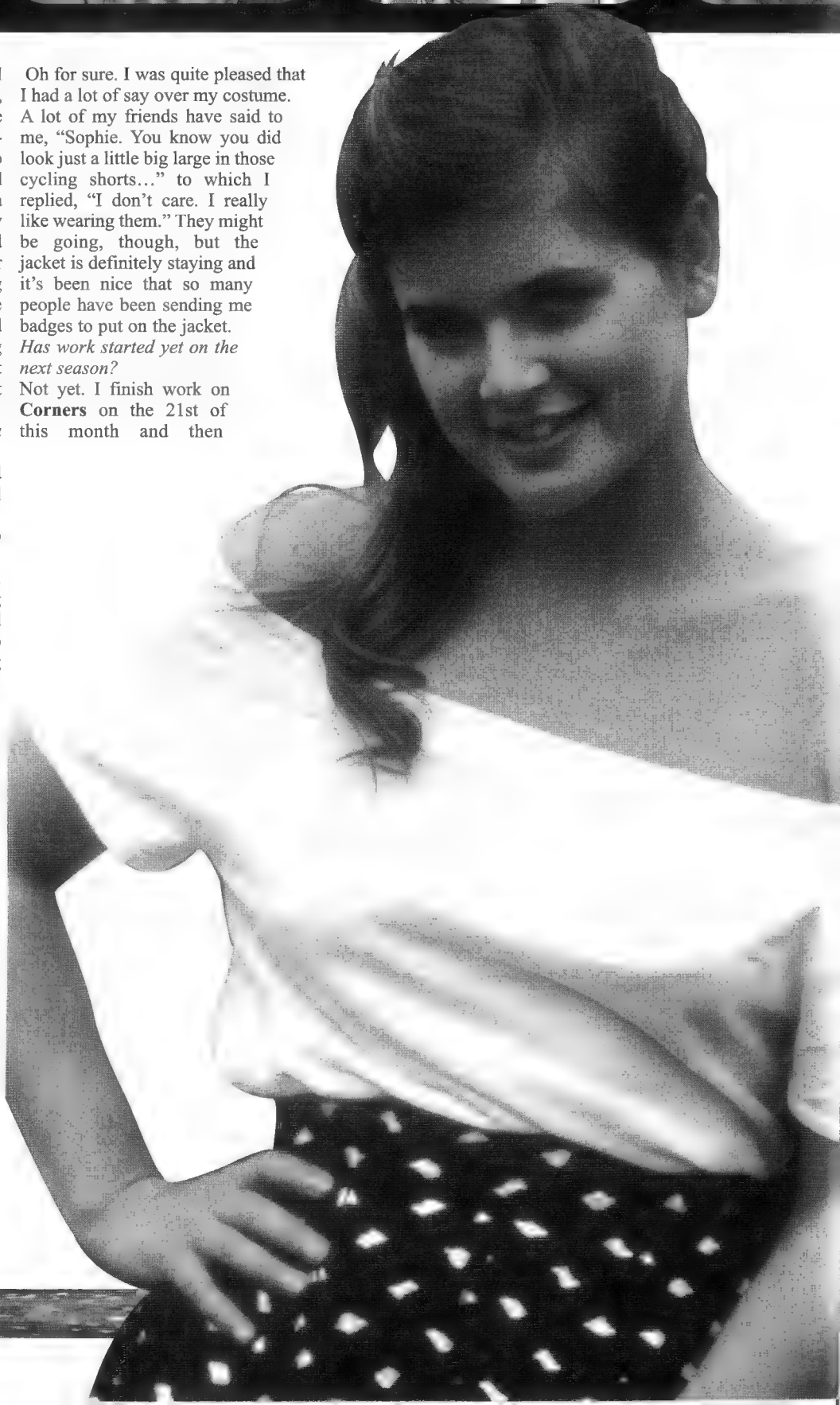
Yes… Yes, that is one thing I have been a fan of for many years, though not in the sense of being a collector. I was mad on **Thunderbirds** when I was little, and aged three my mother made me a Scott Tracey outfit and I used to run around saving the world. In many ways I was a strange child because for at least a year I was convinced I was Scott Tracey. That lasted, I think, until I became whoever it was won Wimbledon the next year! I picked up on **Thunderbirds** again more recently when a friend of mine at university was likewise very keen on Anderson in general, and he encouraged me to do my dissertation on **Thunderbirds.** Fortunately my course tutor was this progressive American and he really encouraged me to do it. I bought my first copy of *SIG* from a science-fiction shop and became a member of *Fanderson* shortly afterwards, though I haven't plucked up the courage to go to one of their conventions.

You're keeping the badge on your jacket?

Oh for sure. I was quite pleased that I had a lot of say over my costume. A lot of my friends have said to me, "Sophie. You know you did look just a little big large in those cycling shorts…" to which I replied, "I don't care. I really like wearing them." They might be going, though, but the jacket is definitely staying and it's been nice that so many people have been sending me badges to put on the jacket.

Has work started yet on the next season?

Not yet. I finish work on **Corners** on the 21st of this month and then



production begins for me on **Doctor Who** on the 28th, so it's quite a tight schedule. I got the script for REMEMBRANCE OF THE DALEKS last week and I read it one night, quite late, just before going to sleep. That's when I suddenly realised that **Doctor Who** is not bed-time reading for me, because I suddenly found myself absolutely scared stiff. And at first they only gave me two episodes, so I was desperate to know what happens to me in episode three as I'm in the cliff-hanger at the end of part two.

Have you seen much of Sylvester McCoy since you completed DRAGONFIRE?

I didn't at first, mainly because we've both been so busy. He was getting ready to do *The Pied Piper* again just as I was being flung into **Corners**. But recently, in the last few weeks, I've been to see him in *Pied Piper* and I went back-stage for a while and chatted to him. It's funny, because I don't actually feel that I know Sylvester terribly well yet. The majority of my scenes in DRAGONFIRE were with Bonnie, so I know her a lot better than I do Sylvester. At first we were quite shy with each other, and yet we know we've got to get on well together during the next six months or so. I'm certainly looking forward to it, and I don't think it will be too hard because we both come from similar backgrounds. We've both had a lot of experience in fringe theatre and children's theatre, and we've both been in situations where we've had to rely on stamina and imagination a lot.

How did you and Bonnie Langford get on?

Very well indeed. I was initially very nervous, as you can probably imagine, walking into the BBC rehearsal rooms for the first time and thinking, "I've got to go through this door and act with Bonnie Langford for the next however many weeks." But I found she was absolutely delightful. She was very friendly and I truthfully felt we got on as friends, which I think shows in DRAGONFIRE. I enjoyed building up that relationship very much, and I think it worked for Mel as a character since it gave her somebody she could react with for a change. Bonnie showed me the ropes really, not just about **Doctor Who**, but also about presenting, and being a presenter for children. She's done a lot in that field, so we talked at length on that subject, and about how we both hated the current trend for wacky styles of presentation that really alienate children. It's all so much, "Look at me, aren't I wonderful", whereas it should be all about communicating with children. We also talked about the fan side of **Doctor Who**, and about how she felt so overwhelmed by the fans, which sort of prepared me for things like conventions. At first, when my agent said to me, "You might get invited to conventions in America" I thought to myself, "Fat chance!" I never realised just how big **Doctor Who** is and how often conventions happen.

"Bonnie showed me the ropes really, not just about Doctor Who, but also about presenting, and being a presenter for children."

*Finally, how long do you think you'll want to carry on doing **Doctor Who**?*

I wouldn't want to do it indefinitely. At the moment I feel I'm in such a fortunate position, not only having an acting role that, although similarish to me, is very obviously not me, more a younger part and less mature. On the other hand, having **Corners** as well, which is all me and it's a children's presenting role, so I feel very lucky indeed. It's a bit worrying to think that you might end up just being the eternal child on TV, but I'm hoping I won't get stuck in that rut.

And will you do Season 26 if asked?

I hope to. There is an option, which I've signed, for Season 26, but whether it goes ahead or not is always open to speculation these days, unfortunately. I'd find it a challenge. Certainly with DRAGONFIRE I found there was such a lot to learn. And now, going back into it, I'm both looking forward to it and dreading it because I know so much more about television, having done **Corners**. I'm going to know where the camera is, I know what the AFM does, I know there's a Director screaming upstairs and calling you names, whereas on DRAGONFIRE I hadn't got a clue and was just acting – which in a way was a great benefit.

1987: THAT WAS THE YEAR THAT WAS

JANUARY

- First publication in hardback of *The Space Museum*, written by Glyn Jones

Friday 2 January
First working day of the new year as Producer John Nathan-Turner and incoming Script-Editor Andrew Cartmel start putting together a list of writers for the new season, and a list of candidates to play the seventh Doctor

Wednesday 7 January
Colin Baker goes public about his sacking from **Doctor Who**. In a two-part interview for *The Sun* he lays the blame for his demise squarely at the door of BBC1 Controller, Michael Grade.

Thursday 29 January
Alasdair Milne is obliged to quit as Director General of the BBC. He will be succeeded next month by Michael Checkland

FEBRUARY

- First publication in hardback of *The Sensorites*, written by Nigel Robinson

Friday 27 February
Sylvester McCoy signs on the dotted line of his contract and is confirmed to become the seventh **Doctor Who**. Arrangements are begun by John Nathan-Turner for a Press photocall on Monday to announce the news. The venue is the **Blue Peter** Garden at Television Centre, with Bonnie Langford also invited along

MARCH

- First publication in hardback of *The Reign of Terror*, written by Ian Marter. Although Marter passed away in October 1986 two titles written by him had been finished before his death, and slated for publication in 1987
- 16mm film prints of episode three of THE FACELESS ONES and part two of THE EVIL OF THE DALEKS are returned to the BBC film archive. The property of a film collector, THE FACELESS ONES episode had been screened the previous year as the highlight of a *TellyCon* event in Birmingham.
- John Birt is headhunted from LWT and installed as Deputy Director-General

Doctor Who is the real McCoy

by PAULINE WALLIN

Eccentric

TIME FLIES IN A TARDIS. Sylvester and Bonnie

Tuesday 3 March
All the national daily newspapers carry photographs of the new Doctor, posing with Bonnie Langford around the TARDIS prop. As always, the casting of a new Doctor is big news and most of the papers allow anywhere from a quarter to a half page to their articles. *Today* even prints the piece in colour.

Saturday 21 March
The ***Doctor Who Appreciation Society*** hosts the first UK-organised convention aboard a ship, with participants sailing from Harwich to the Hook of Holland aboard one of the cross-channel ferries. On board as guests as Fraser Hines, Mark Strickson, John Leeson and John Levene.

Tuesday 24 March
The U.K's first cable station to air BBC drama programmes, Superchannel, begins a run of Tom Baker **Doctor Who** serials, commencing with ROBOT episode one at 7.30. Due to rights and other clearance problems some serials, such as THE SONTARAN EXPERIMENT and PLANET OF EVIL are excluded from this first spread of reruns. Superchannel's lengthy run of **Doctor Who** screenings marks the first time U.K fans have experienced the luxury of regular repeats.

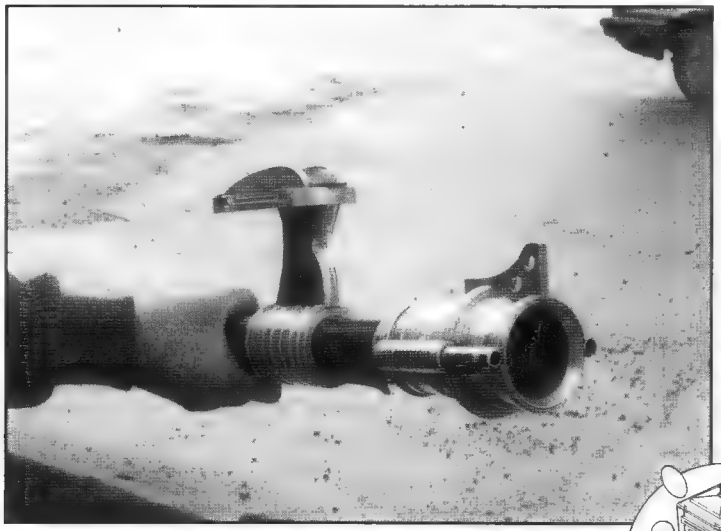
Saturday 28 March
Second Doctor Patrick Troughton, 67, passes away in Columbus Georgia, mid-way through a convention. A massive heart attack in the small hours of Saturday morning proves fatal and by mid-afternoon, UK time, Troughton's death is headline news on all BBC and ITV bulletins. Tributes continue in the Press for several days

Monday 30 March
Production begins on **Doctor Who**'s 25th season as the cast assembles for the start of rehearsals for TIME AND THE RANI.

APRIL

- First publication in hardback of *The Romans*, written by Donald Cotton

More about...
On location with TIME AND THE RANI



Dr Who is bracing himself

THE new Doctor Who, Sylvester McCoy, got dressed up for a space adventure yesterday as he teamed up with his assistant Bonnie Langford for a new series, filmed on location in Cloford Quarry, Somerset. The new adventure, to be shown in September, starts when the Tardis crashes and the doctor is forced to take part in a sinister space destruction project.

Tuesday 7 April
Most newspapers carry features from yesterday's photocall at Shepton Mallet to publicise the new Doctor in costume. With the Doctor in Cloford Quarry are Bonnie Langford and Kate O'Mara, the latter gaining most of the headlines due to her prominent role in the American glossy soap, **Dynasty**.

Friday 10 April
Last day in the office for Nigel Robinson, the longest serving and most prolific Editor/writer of the Target Books range of **Doctor Who** novelisations. Over a three period Robinson has supervised the commissioning and production of more than 40 titles

Saturday 18 April
Another *TellyCon* event is staged at the Imperial Hotel, Birmingham, with a highlight being the first screening of the recovered EVIL OF THE DALEKS episode. That same episode is screened the following Easter weekend at an event at the National Film Theatre.

MAY

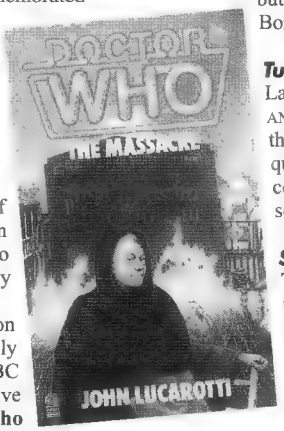
- First publication in hardback of *The Ambassadors of Death*, written by Terrance Dicks.
- BBC1 screens the two Peter Cushing Dalek films over consecutive Saturday mornings as a replacement for the **Saturday Superstore** children's programme, which is being rested
- Michael Grade is promoted to Managing Director of Networked Television, a post that effectively means he is understudying to take over from outgoing BBC Managing Director Bill Cotton, who is due to retire next Spring

Tuesday 4 May
Last day of production on TIME AND THE RANI.

Wednesday 5 May
BBC's **Breakfast Time** broadcast includes a feature about the making of TIME AND THE RANI. Various interviews recorded on location at Cloford Quarry during April are aired in a recorded feature that was originally to have been shown over the May Day Bank Holiday...

Monday 18 May
Production begins on the second story of the season, PARADISE TOWERS.

Saturday 30 May
Patrick Troughton's memory is commemorated by a one-day convention in London, organised by Phoenix Productions. The line-up of guests includes Peter Bryant, Innes Lloyd, Barry Letts, Christopher Barry and Peter Halliday.



JUNE

- First publication in hardback of *The Massacre*, written by John Lucarotti with little reference to the original script, rewritten by Donald Tosh.
- An independent film production company, Coast-to-Coast, formally concludes negotiations with BBC Enterprises to purchase exclusive rights to make a **Doctor Who** movie. Now funding must be sought if the project is to become reality, but already Caroline Munro is being suggested as the companion to Tim Curry's Doctor.
- Sylvester McCoy appears on the new Saturday morning children's magazine show, **It's Wicked** to promote both himself as the new Doctor, and the new **Doctor Who** season which has just been confirmed as airing opposite **Coronation Street** this autumn

Friday 19 June
Last day of production on PARADISE TOWERS.

Saturday 20 June
Production begins on the third story of the season, DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN.

JULY

- First publication in hardback of *The Macra Terror*, written by Ian Stuart Black
- BBC Video releases three **Doctor Who** titles at the budget price of £10.99. These compilation versions of DEATH TO THE DALEKS, PYRAMIDS OF MARS and THE SEEDS OF DEATH have been available before, but only via the rental market for the princely sum each of £24.99. Jon Pertwee attends a launch signing at the Virgin megastore for the first of these.

Friday 3 July
The BBC's local **Wales Today** news and magazine programme broadcasts a feature on the location shooting of DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN. The piece was recorded earlier in the day during a Press call at the Barry Island holiday camp.

Saturday 4 July
Photographs and articles publicising the making of DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN appear in many national newspapers. Ken Dodd is the main focus of attention, but Don Henderson, Sylvester McCoy and Bonnie Langford get a look in too.

Tuesday 7 July
Last day of location shooting for DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN. This is not quite the end of production as there is a small quantity of studio material that will be completed during work on the next serial.

Saturday 11 July
The convention *FalCon 2* is staged at the Ladbrooke-Beaufort hotel in Bath. Invited guests included Louise Jameson and Richard Franklin

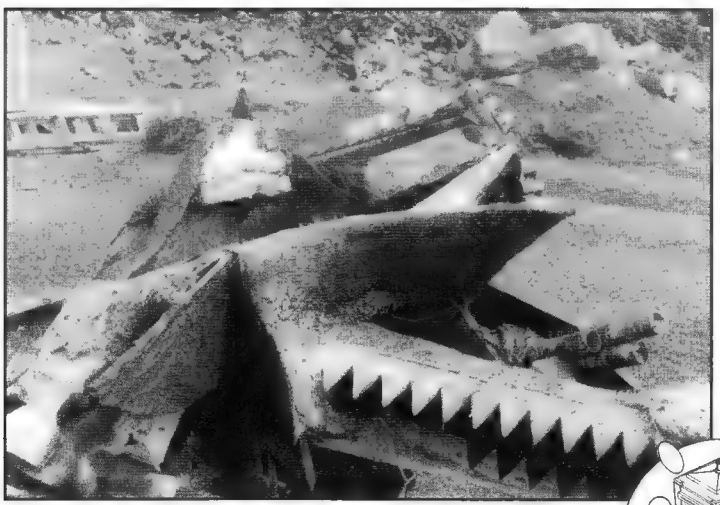
Thursday 16 July
Production begins on the fourth story of the season, DRAGONFIRE.

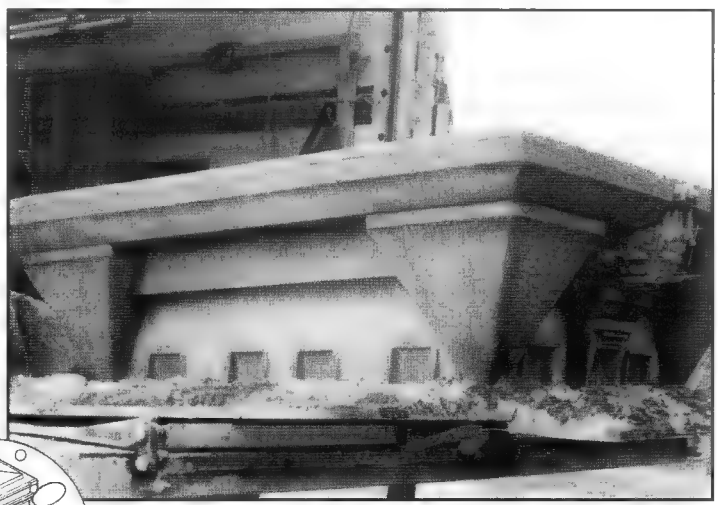
AUGUST

- First publication in hardback of *The Rescue*, the final manuscript written by the late Ian Marter

Wednesday 12 August
Following a Press call the previous day at Television Centre, 25-year old Sophie Aldred is unveiled as the latest **Doctor Who** companion. As always, the casting of a new regular in the series is hot news, and pictures of Sophie Aldred and Sylvester McCoy outside the TARDIS appear in most of the dailies.

More about...
On location with TIME AND THE RANI





Thursday 13 August
Last day of production on DRAGONFIRE, which brings to a close production of **Doctor Who**'s 24th season. It is also Bonnie Langford's last day with the series.

Thursday 20 August
Plans for the BBC's autumn schedule make the headlines after a Press briefing yesterday by Michael Grade. Although there are details of other new shows in the £60 million programme line-up, it is the clash of **Doctor Who** versus **Coronation Street** that is the front-running story.

Saturday 22 August
The first trailers for Season 24 are aired, showing a variety of jump-cut edited clips from the first three serials of the new series. The trailer ends with a specially recorded piece of footage of the Doctor announcing to Mel that they could do with a holiday…

Monday 31 August
The Bank Holiday edition of **But first… This** on BBC1 includes a feature on the making of DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN. A team from the programme covered part of the night-shoot near Cardiff Airport on 7 July, and the feature includes interviews with Ken Dodd, John Nathan-Turner and Sylvester McCoy.

WHO'S THAT GIRL: Sophie with new Dr Who Sylvester McCoy

Oh boy! She's just a natural

SOPHIE ALDRED'S role as the tomboy new assistant to Dr Who won't require a great deal of effort.

"The character is exactly how I was when I was 16," said Sophie, who once posed as a boy to win a place in a soccer team.

Sophie, 24, will play chemistry expert Ace alongside the new Dr Who Sylvester McCoy.

A newcomer to television, she graduated with a degree in drama from Manchester University. She takes over from Bonnie Langford towards the end of the new autumn series when Bonnie leaves to make a television special and to star in Charlie Girl in Manchester.

She will be the 27th assistant in Dr Who's 24-year history and arrives at a crucial time.

BBC boss Michael Grade tried to axe the show last year but producer John Nathan-Turner hopes the new partnership can take them to a successful future.

SEPTEMBER

- First publication in hardback of *Terror of the Vervoids*, written by Pip and Jane Baker.
- Peter Haining's third **Doctor Who** coffee-table book, *The Time Traveller's Guide* is published by WH Allen.

Monday 7 September
Doctor Who returns to BBC1 at 7:35pm with the first episode of TIME AND THE RANI, having been trailed since the final episode of **Star Cops** the previous week. The programme is up against **Coronation Street**, which has a five-minute start over its BBC rival every week. Ratings begin at 5.1 million for this first episode, but drop away steadily as the serial progresses.

Saturday 12 September
The start of the ***Doctor Who** Appreciation Society*'s annual two-day event, PanoptCon, at Imperial College, West London. Officially the eighth such event it boasts a guest list that includes Colin Baker, Peter Davison, Sophie Aldred, Nicola Bryant, Nicholas Courtney, Katy Manning, Deborah Watling, Sarah Sutton and Janet Fielding, plus a host of writers, Producers and technicians. On the same day a full-page article appears in *Daily Mail*, purportedly by DWAS Co-Ordinator Andrew Beech, publicly criticising the producers of today for the "…murder of our oldest sci-fi series".

Wednesday 16 September
Doctor Who receives another telling-off, this time from those viewers willing to send letters to BBC's **Points of View** programme. Of the letters read out, most harboured reservations about the latest series.

Friday 25 September
The first edition of Sophie Aldred's new children's series, **Corners** is transmitted

Tuesday 29 September
More flak for **Doctor Who** as Sylvester McCoy, John Nathan-Turner and Bonnie Langford face criticism about the show during an edition of the BBC phone-in question-and-answer programme, **Open Air**.

OCTOBER

- First publication in hardback of *The Time Meddler*, written by Nigel Robinson, and of *K-9 and Company* by Terence Dudley which appears only in paperback, being one of the few WH Allen novelisations of this period not to be granted a hardback first edition.
- *Doctor Who - Build the TARDIS* book by Mark Harris is published by WH Allen, promising readers, 'Make your very own time machine without scissors or glue'.
- Michael Grade gains two deputies as Jonathan Powell is promoted to Controller, BBC1 and Alan Yentob becomes Controller, BBC2, after a selection process which brought the rivalry between Grade and new Deputy DG John Birt to the fore.

Friday 2 October
The Sun newspaper prints a story headlined, 'Beeb axe Dr Who after 24 years', claiming the series' future is in doubt due to falling

THIS SEASON'S BOOKS...

Obviously hastily written, Pip and Jane Baker's adaptation of TIME AND THE RANI retains the breathless style of their earlier novels – more an over-enthusiastic commentary track written years before DVD was even thought of than a proper narrative, and adds in the supremely embarrassing device of the Tetrap language – English written backwards! And in case anyone failed to get the point, they even provide translations, pointing out on one occasion that 'in the twisted, back-to-front language of the Tetraps, this meant...". Words fail, in either direction...

Still, they do at least do Colin Baker the honour of providing a few brief moments for his Doctor before the Rani's attack begins, even throwing in a mention of the Hostile Action Displacement System, which shows that their enthusiasm for the show extended to looking up its history and terminology. Their enthusiasm for **Doctor Who** cannot be doubted... it's just the results which prove disappointing.

Disappointing is also a good word for Stephen Wyatt's novelisation of PARADISE TOWERS. Few would dispute that there was a better story lurking in the script than actually reached the screen and a full-blown novel built around this tale could have been stunning, but Stephen Wyatt's print version doesn't seize the chance to create a more dazzling atmosphere of disintegrating technology, or to invest the characters with a life of their own separate to the sometimes misguided screen portrayals. So it's Richard Briers' interpretation of the Chief Caretaker who drifts from the page and the cleaners remain cumbersome machines rather than an all-pervading threat, despite a few interesting additions to their number.

Malcolm Kohll's DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN is more like it. Though his write-up is more conventional than it might have been, missing the chance to build on the fun atmosphere of the on-screen romp by following in the footsteps of more humorous books like *The Myth Makers* and *The Romans*, he adds the occasional bizarre touch worthy of Douglas Adams... or perhaps Gareth Roberts, given how his description of the Bannermen's rehabilitation once deprived of Gavrok's war-mongering attitudes prefigures the Chelonians' decision to take up flower arranging by quite a few years. The casual mention of Ray's fate as she heads off onto the road at the end is also a nice touch. This is a book which might have been a lot better if written a few years later, when Ian Briggs and Ben Aaronovitch had made such expansions to their tales routine

Which leads nicely to DRAGONFIRE, where Briggs first shows hints of the style which would make the book of THE CURSE OF FENRIC so enjoyable, setting the stage for the expanded novelisations of REMEMBRANCE and BATTLEFIELD. The additions and explorations of the characters aren't as frequent here, but in many ways **Dragonfire** is a better written book than *Fenric*, which sometimes lapses into self-indulgence. And it definitely marked the death knell for the simplistic novelisations of previous years. From now on, novels would be the near ubiquitous norm.

TELEVISION Today PAGE 21

MR GOOD SHOWS HIS BAD SIDE

DR WHO (BBC1, 7.30pm)

IT-COM veteran Richard Briers abandons his cuddly, woolly image tonight to play a fascist monster.

He exchanges the suburban jungle for a hostile planet and a role as the villainous Chief Caretaker in Dr Who.

Fans of Ever Decreasing Circles and The Good Life might not recognise him – a Hitler moustache disguises his familiar look.

Richard is making the most of his chance to indulge in a touch of melodrama.

"Most of the roles I play are naturalistic so this is a chance to show off a bit," he says.

"The Chief Caretaker is an absolute monster who eats people. He lives in an appalling high rise block of flats and pops up in the next four episodes."

Although Richard is not a Dr Who fan – "I've always found it too frightening and so have the children" – he jumped at the chance to star in the cult show.

"It's been extremely hard work. You are in a TV studio for 12 hours a day. It's very exhausting for the actors."

AMAZING

"Fortunately the new Dr Who, Sylvester McCoy has a very good temperament and he doesn't flip".

Richard makes another departure this week from television sitcoms, when he can be heard on Radio Three as a frightened philosopher in Largo Desolato by Czech dissident Vaclav Havel, translated by playwright Tom Stoppard.

"What I liked about the character is that he isn't portrayed as a shaking hero he is a shaking wreck, and that is exactly how I would be in his shoes," says Richard.

Working on the play brought Richard back memories of his early career when, with Ronnie Barker he played one of the critics in the first production of Stoppard's The Real Inspector Hound.

Despite his national fame Richard counts himself lucky that his "ordinary" face means he can merge into the background in public places. "I can sit on the tube and no one bothers me," he says.

During the past 28 years 59-year-old Richard has clocked up an amazing 180 sit-coms. He is also a respected stage actor – next month he plays Malvolio in Shakespeare's Twelfth Night at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith – but recognises that television turned him into a national figure.

"You simply never get known for stage work," he says.

MILLIONS

"You could be in a West End play for 25 years and not be seen by a fraction of the millions who watch one episode of Ever Decreasing Circles."

Though Richard is inextricably linked with suburban comedies, the characters he so accurately creates are not, he stresses, cosy figures.

"I play very emotional people," he says. "Man in an Ever Decreasing Circles has a tremendous inferiority complex. He has a paranoiac personality. There is nothing cosy about him, he is a very desperate person.

"It is amazing what happens behind the net curtains of suburban roads. There are incredible passions going on."

● CATHERINE CUSACK who give up a drama degree for practical experience makes her TV debut in Dr Who tonight.

Catherine, 18, is from an actors family including her celebrated actor father Cyril Cusack, and step-sisters Sinead, Sorcha and Niamh.

VAL JONES-EVANS

ENEMIES: Doctor Who meets the evil Caretaker

audience figures and public dissatisfaction with Sylvester McCoy.

Monday 5 October

First episode of PARADISE TOWERS is broadcast. Several newspapers carry quotes and other interview material with Richard Briers from a Press call on the set of this story during production.

NOVEMBER

- First publication in hardback of *The Mysterious Planet*, written by Terrance Dicks
- Michael Grade abruptly quits the BBC in disgust at his treatment by the Board of Governors. He accepts a post with the corporation's rival, Channel Four..
- Publication of the first volume of David Saunders' *The Encyclopaedia of Doctor Who*, covering A to D, with interior illustrations by Tony Clark.

Saturday 14 November

Sylvester McCoy appears on an edition of the BBC's **Going Live** programme to promote **Doctor Who** and the start of DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN, whose first episode is broadcast this evening. Several newspapers carry photographs from the Barry Island Press call. One from the *Daily Mirror* shows Ray literally flying into the Doctor's arms!

Thursday 19 November

The *London Evening Standard* prints an article alleging that angry **Doctor Who** fans are writing to the BBC demanding changes to **Doctor Who** to stop its "alarming decline". The article is picking up on comments voiced in *DWB* that blame for the ratings decline lies with Producer John Nathan-Turner.

Sunday 22 November

The critical stance against **Doctor Who** continues as BBC2 airs an edition of the audience feedback programme, **Did you see...** By way of marking tomorrow's 24th anniversary of **Doctor Who**'s beginning, interviewee's Peter Anghelides, Manuel Alvarado and Jeremy Bentham are invited to compare modern **Doctor Who** production to the achievements of the past.

Monday 23 November

First episode of DRAGONFIRE is broadcast, announced by the BBC as the 150th **Doctor Who** serial.

DECEMBER

- First publication in hardback of *Time and the Rani*, written by Pip and Jane Baker
- First publication of Titan Books new range of **Doctor Who** script books, edited by former DWAS Exec member John McElroy. The first title is *The Tribe of Gum*, the first **Doctor Who** story.

Monday 6 December

Broadcast of the final episode of DRAGONFIRE brings **Doctor Who**'s 24th season on air to a close.

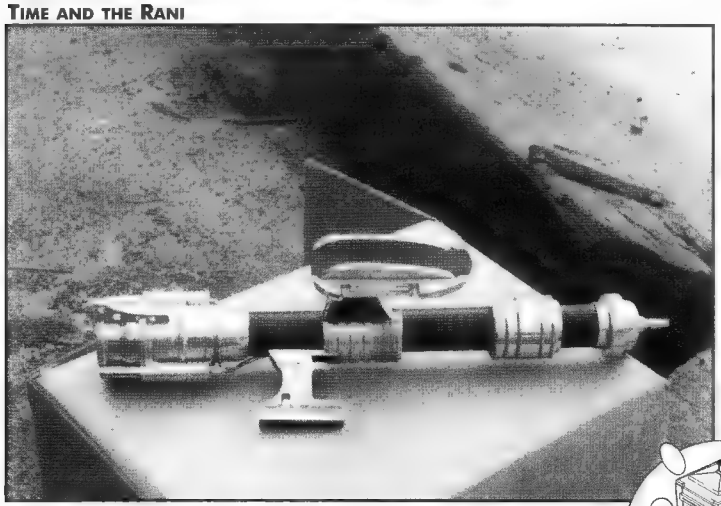
Wednesday 9 December

Several newspapers, including *The Star* print complaints about the melting face scene from part three of DRAGONFIRE.. *DWB* agrees the scene, "...was just there to shock", and reportedly many toddlers were left "sobbing in terror".

Monday 14 December

The Sun claims to have uncovered the identity of the actor to play the Doctor in the film being planned by Coast-to-Coast – John Cleese!

More about...
TIME AND THE RANI



Down-Graded

In 1987 Michael Grade left the BBC and ended his influence over the future of Doctor Who. His recent autobiography finally shows his attitude to the series – and a few things about the work of British television in the 1980s...

JUST AS Season 24 reached its end, the man who'd become synonymous with **Doctor Who**'s fate over the last three eventful years was preparing to leave the BBC. The newly promoted Managing Director of Television, Michael Grade, was about to make good on the prediction he'd made to his wife a few months earlier, following a pyrrhic victory in a power struggle with equally newly appointed Deputy Director General John Birt, that he'd "be gone by Christmas" by defecting to Channel 4.

By this time, the hatred which many **Doctor Who** fans had felt for him in March 1985 (epitomised by the Award of the Horse's Arse sent to him by American fans, which, as he describes in his autobiography *It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time*, still has pride of place in his loo) had mellowed into a more generous opinion, as reflected in previous instalments of *Armageddon Factors*, that he might be the series' most influential supporter on the Sixth Floor of the BBC. A reluctant and half-hearted supporter, certainly, but someone who – having blundered into an embarrassing controversy by cancelling the twenty-third season after a cursory glance at the show's performance – had been forced to take a closer look at it, and realised that this could be a valuable property in the BBC's schedules – if it could regain its form.

According to this analysis, supported by his comments to the Edinburgh Television Festival during a game of fantasy scheduling, Grade's departure leaving **Doctor Who** in the hands of Jonathan Powell, the drama chief who'd allowed its drift to develop in the mid-1980s, was the blow to **Doctor Who**'s long-term survival which finally killed it two years later.

In the absence of any comment from those behind the scenes who must still be amazed that the controversy continues to dog them in any form fifteen years later, it was a credible interpretation, as reflected by comments in *DWB* and elsewhere at the time, and by **IN•VISION** in recent years. But now one of the suspects has broken his silence, and unfortunately Grade's description of his attitude to **Who** makes it untenable.

"Why beat about the bush," he says candidly. "I hated it. I thought it had lost its way, was losing its audience and deserved to lose its slot," he explains, making the familiar point about its effects being out-dated in the age *of Star Wars* and *ET*. "And curiously," he continues, "for such an old-fashioned show it could be gratuitously violent."

Well, that was the criticism at the time, and Grade backs it up with examples – but not the sadistic punishment zone of VENGEANCE ON VAROS or the implied cannabalism of THE TWO DOCTORS: "A creature with the ability to materialise in plastic turned a shop window of tailors' dummies into monsters who smashed the glass and calmly walked down the street killing everyone on sight," while a horrific drowning achieved the feat of putting Mary Whitehouse and Grade on the same side in condemning it. In short, Grade refers to SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE and THE DEADLY ASSASSIN, both of which marked highpoints in the series' public success.

There's two ways to interpret these comments. The cynical one would be to assume that Grade now remembers violence having been a factor in his decision, and flicked through a history of **Doctor Who** to find examples to support his feelings, whether or not they occurred during his time as Controller. The other is that his hatred of the show was genuine and long-standing, going back fifteen years to SPEARHEAD FROM SPACE, and that the undoubted ratings success of THE DEADLY ASSASSIN would have had no impact on his decision. This was a violent series which had no place on air, whether it was the ailing programme of 1985 or the top-ten success of 1976.

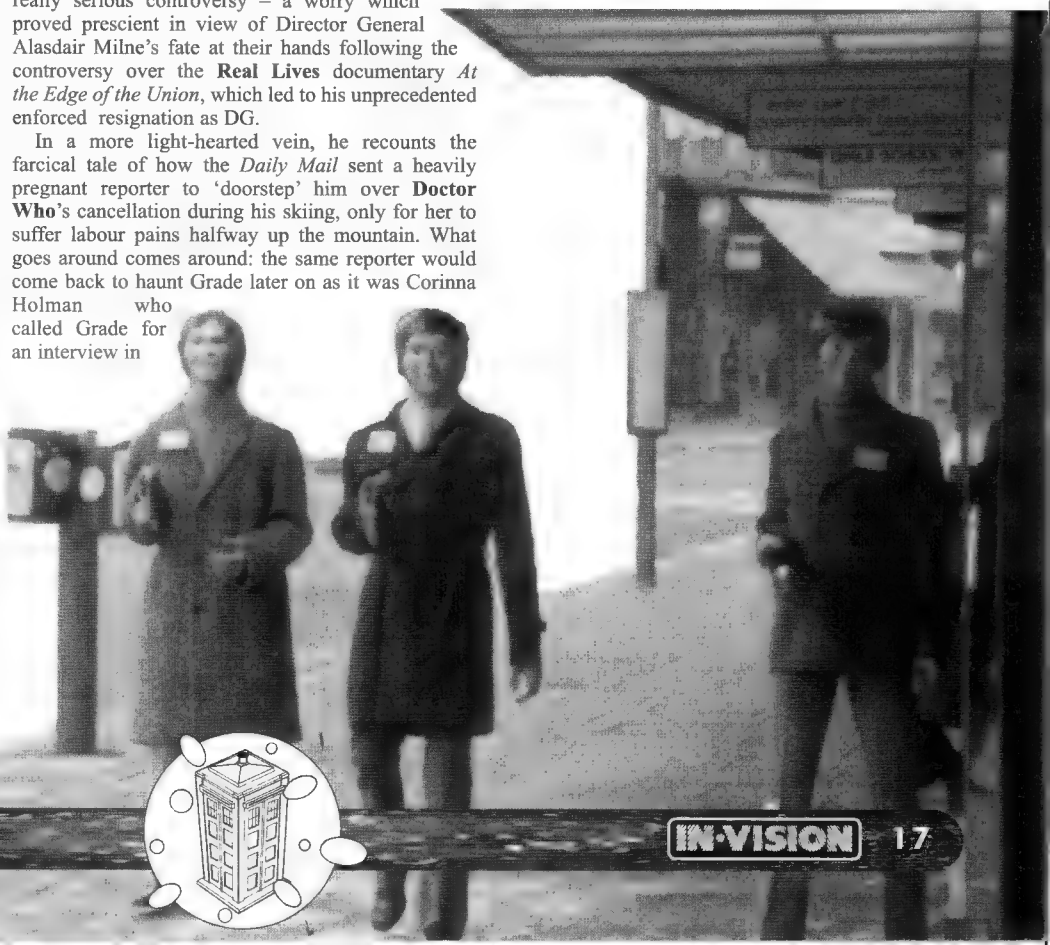
It's a curious position for a ratings-minded Controller who also takes justifiable pride in his decision to press ahead with unedited transmissions of Dennis Potter's **The Singing Detective** in the face of inevitable controversy to follow, and the contrast in his attitudes can only be explained by one thing: the long-standing notion that art has a licence to shock in ways that mere entertainment should not.

In his own book, Michael Grade remains puzzled at the controversy the entire affair generated. As Grade notes, "I had merely rested a programme which was way past its sell-by date; I hadn't committed mass murder," but the short-lived grilling he received from the BBC Governors before they forgot about the show left him seriously worried about his position if he ever became involved in a really serious controversy – a worry which proved prescient in view of Director General Alasdair Milne's fate at their hands following the controversy over the **Real Lives** documentary *At the Edge of the Union*, which led to his unprecedented enforced resignation as DG.

In a more light-hearted vein, he recounts the farcical tale of how the *Daily Mail* sent a heavily pregnant reporter to 'doorstep' him over **Doctor Who**'s cancellation during his skiing, only for her to suffer labour pains halfway up the mountain. What goes around comes around: the same reporter would come back to haunt Grade later on as it was Corinna Holman who called Grade for an interview in 1991. Fearing that she wanted to discuss his impending divorce, he avoided the call, but instead the story proved to be about the mother he hadn't seen since she walked out on her one-year old son 45 years before. With his daughter's 21st birthday to come on the day after the story ran, an angry Grade felt that private matters should be off limits.

But the story of holidays provides a curious background to Grade's championing of Dennis Potter at the time, as revealed in John R Cook's biography of Potter, *A Life on Screen*, published in 1995. In 1981, while still at the ITV station LWT, Grade had commissioned him and his production company Pennies from Heaven Limited to provide six plays, some from Potter himself, some from other writers who'd he'd commission. With Potter still wounded by Alasdair Milne's decision to pull his play **Brimstone and Treacle** from the BBC schedules (not only suppressing **Brimstone** itself, but also throwing out of balance the other plays in a thematically linked trilogy, which, predictably, Milne hadn't viewed when taking his decision), the writer jumped at the chance, but as Cook describes, the arrangement ran into problems.

Potter and his producer Kenith Trodd had envisaged making the plays on film, as they were increasingly keen to do, but the already substantial budget the LWT board was reluctantly persuaded to accept was



based on the notion of making them on video tape in the studio. Once the project was approved, the budget was increased to match Potter's demands, but costs continued to escalate as LWT's wardrobe and set departments went overboard in their enthusiasm for the chance to work on a quality product, hiring authentic period watches and set-dressings for the extras which would pass unnoticed on screen, but not in the books. Once production of the first two plays was complete, with each of them massively over-budget, Grade pulled the plug.

An inevitable and reasonable decision on the part of a channel manager? Perhaps, but at the time, some years away from the moment when Grade could, as he admits seeing it make up to Potter by championing **The Singing Detective** and scheduling a retrospective season climaxing in the first screening of **Brimstone and Treacle**, Potter had another view. His prestigious, critically notable, and pricey plays had been useful to LWT as a high-brow counter balance to its diet of quiz shows and **Metal Mickey** when they were seeking to persuade the ITA to renew LWT's franchise as London's commercial broadcaster for the weekends in 1981. But once the franchise had been renewed for another seven years such high-brow fare had done its job of ensuring that LWT retained its proverbial licence to print money, and were eating up that money to no effect, while getting in the way of the high-rating shows which provided the profits. And so they were axed, in Potter's view.

Michael Grade was unavailable to answer Potter's accusations. On the morning the cancellation was announced, he'd left Britain for a holiday...

Well, television is a business, and business is often a *dirty* business. But those who live by the sword die by the sword, and by the summer of 1987 the Damoclean thread over Grade's head was wearing thin. The enforced departure of Alasdair Milne from the BBC – Grade, typically, had just left for the Dover ferry to go on holiday when Milne was pushed out – triggered a feeding frenzy among television executives hoping to fill John Reith's massive shoes. Grade himself applied for the job – as he notes, it was the first time in his career that he'd ever been interviewed for a job – but he knew he was unlikely to get it, and favoured BBC old hand and BBC1 Controller from 1967-1973 Paul Fox, who might have been the prime candidate had he not refused to attend an interview, saying simply that he'd accept the job if it were offered to him. So, Grade turned his attentions to ensuring that the job didn't go to the current affairs journalist David Dimbleby, who he feared would neglect the BBC's entertainment side. When accountant and Deputy DG Michael Checkland was appointed to the top job, Grade's reactions was a simple whoop of 'We fucked Dimbleby!, he admits.

It was a victory which soon backfired. Checkland was reluctant to accept Dimbleby as his deputy, but saw the need for someone with news and current affairs expertise to sort out the area which had brought down his predecessor. He turned to Grade's old colleague and protegee John Birt.

At the time Grade believed that Birt's remit would be limited to news and current affairs, while he would soon step into the retiring Bill Cotton's shoes as Managing Director of television – a position which would put him in pole position to succeed Checkland as DG in the early 1990s, still some years short of his fiftieth birthday.

Instead Birt quickly moved to make the nominal authority of Deputy Director General real, sending notes and memos on programmes under Grade's authority, while winning himself a position, in place of Cotton, on the board which would select Grade's two closest subordinates – the new Controllers of BBC1 and BBC2.

Both Grade and Cotton protested vehemently to Checkland, and a grubby backstage deal was worked out – Birt would have the place on the board he needed to assert his authority and his place in the list of succession, but the board itself would chose the candidates Grade wanted – Jonathan Powell and Alan Yentob. Yet Grade knew his BBC career was over, with his friendship with the man who was now his boss and main rival destroyed.

Yet internal politics tends to save those it destroys. Negotiations over the purchase of a documentary on the film *Cry Freedom* brought Grade into contact with Richard Attenborough, the chairman of the board at Channel 4. As Attenborough responded to prompting by admitting that the search for Jeremy Isaac's successor as first Chief Executive of Channel 4 was not going well, Grade let him know that he'd take the job if offered, while working out how to truant off the annual trip to Los Angeles to assess new American series the following weekend so he could attend a clandestine meeting with Channel 4's Board. Despite concerns from Isaacs (who famously told Grade at the hand-over ceremony that he was passing him a sacred trust and would throttle him if he messed it up) the appointment went through just in time for Grade to be sure of his new job before his resignation was delivered to the BBC. The entire business tends to reflect badly on all parties, reflecting how politics, ambition and behind the scenes favours take priority over providing for the audience. But Grade did go on to become a great controller for Channel 4, maintaining its stature while widening its appeal and putting its finances on a secure footing.

So how else to judge the role of the Controller who was effectively responsible for turning **Doctor Who** from an ailing television series into a thriving book franchise? Perhaps his admissions of his own failings provide a clue, as he's keen to admit that some of his greatest successes came his way almost by accident. **EastEnders** was already in the pipeline when he started thinking that the BBC needed an audience grabber along its lines to anchor its schedule; **Blackadder** was destined for the axe at the meeting where its producers described how they wanted to revamp the series, cutting its budget in the process, and as he admits on page 329 of his autobiography he found the pilot of **Father Ted** 'Infantile, mindless and childish', and couldn't even follow the plot line. Only the vehemence of his controller of comedy's response to his suggestion that it be written off as a failed experiment saved the show. As Grade puts it, "Seamus Cassidy believed in it and I believed in him; he was right and I was wrong."

His strength as a television chief has been to trust his lieutenants and make use of their talents. This explains why Grade has, despite the little local difficulty of **Doctor Who** and the thwarting of his ambitions to become Director General, retained a respected place in British television **Doctor Who**'s tragedy may have been was that there was no-one there to argue its case. And it was those who'd failed to do this who'd now be in charge.

Charting a Stormy Course...

The Editor takes a personal look back at Season 24 – and how what he recalled as the weakest season in *Doctor Who*'s history is a little better than he remembered.

WHERE WERE you in 1987? With **I Love 1980s** coming to its end on BBC2 just as this issue of **IN-VISION** goes to press, and nostalgia so in vogue that top comedians will soon be filling Television Centre with their memories of the day they were first invited to make a nostalgia show, it seems a relevant question. What was going on in your own life affects everyone's opinion of something – your favourite Doctor is usually the first one you saw, the series was at its best when you were fourteen... and after years of regarding Season 24 as something so bad it was unwatchable, I've now realised that I might not have disliked it quite so much if I hadn't been in my first weeks of university when it reached the screen.

Watching PARADISE TOWERS in a communal TV room at the Student Union as people guffawed in disbelief at Richard Briers' incredible performance... then, once I'd got a video and portable in my room, I found myself wincing at my love of the series as the lively intelligent girl from just down the corridor who'd called round to see **Blackadder the Third** stuck around to watch an old **Moonlighting** showed an interest in my interests by asking about that week's **Doctor Who**. Embarrassment has never run so deep as it did in the week of DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN 2. No, the University of East Anglia in Autumn of 1987 was not a good place to be a fan.

Rewatching this season, in some cases for the first time since a visiting American friend wanted to see the new season a dozen years ago, they're not as bad as I remembered... but as I'd have put three of them in my bottom five when ***DWM*** was next polling, that's not saying much. And unfortunately the improvement isn't that great: it merely becomes a poor season rather than an awful one.

"Unfortunately the improvement isn't that great: it merely becomes a poor season rather than an awful one."

The overall impression is that **Doctor Who** is in the hands of a crew who are trying desperately to turn a supertanker. They don't quite know where they're trying to go yet, but they do know it's currently on course for the rocks. The captain's aware that something's wrong, but doesn't quite know what to do beyond hoping that some new paint and a new figurehead will get him through the problem, as it's always done before. The first mate's jumped overboard, and the tiller's in the hands of an enthusiastic newcomer, backed up by like-minded friends who've got big ideas and know the theory, but are just discovering that reality doesn't respond quite so smoothly...

But we start with a product of the salvage crew, in the form of Pip and Jane Baker's TIME AND THE RANI. If it seems better in retrospect than it did at the time, that can only be because you're ready for the moments of sheer embarrassment, starting with that appalling opening sequence where the new Doctor prattles, over-reacts and finally does a gurning prat-fall, and better able to spot the moments which work – some superb effects, a few occasions where McCoy gets the balance right in a way that suggests he might well have matured into a more straight-forwardly traditional Doctor than he eventually played, and the sheer delight of Kate O'Mara's performance as the Rani – or rather as Mel, because she's a bit of a panto villain as the Rani herself, with the script throwing away the intriguingly different amoral scientist of her debut in favour of a dodgy retread of the Master. Richard Gauntlett also scores rather well as Urak, realising that a script which paints you as a moustache twirling villain and a costume and voice-treatment which make subtle acting near impossible isn't nevertheless a licence to go over the top. Top marks there, and it's a pity he didn't get to return – as Urak, or better as a variety of other

aliens in the old Michael Wisher rep-style.

But despite this, as a straight-forward action-adventure in the traditional **Doctor Who** style, TIME AND THE RANI is fatally flawed. All the elements are there, but few of them mesh together. The characters are archetypes who never develop beyond their basic functions – stalwart rebel, troubled quisling and various victims - and fulfil their roles whether the plot actually demonstrates a need for them to do so. So Beyus – a rather good performance despite everything from Donald Pickering, who deserved to be in a rather better **Who** story - stays behind to save the day at the cost of his own life as the repentant traitor always does... even though there's no need for him to do so. Such non-sequitors would become common later in the seventh Doctor's era as connecting scenes and lines were lost in frantic last minute edits, but it's curious to find them in Pip and Jane's last hurrah.

But the biggest problem is Andrew Morgan's inexplicable decision to relocate the story from gothic woods to yet another quarry as if the latter was a new venue for **Doctor Who**, and every alien world in the past had looked like English woodland. In the process the Hammer Horror atmosphere, which might have saved the script by making the over-blown language and archetypal characters seem part of that tradition, is cut away.

Miscasting also mars PARADISE TOWERS, creating apparent confusions in the concept that need not have been there. Is it decades since the Towers were abandoned, or only years? The Rezzies and the Kangs behave as if it's the latter, and you could believe the Caretakers have been following their rule book for generations, but Pex is simply too young for that to be true. Howard Cooke brings a genuinely endearing quality to the role, but while this puts him head and shoulders above the similar case of Ingrid Pitt in WARRIORS OF THE DEEP, but this is still a repositioning of the character which damages the story. If played by Dave Prowse, for example, Pex wouldn't have been so well acted, but the over-the-hill muscle-man who was once credible as a hero until he showed himself a coward would have suited the concept better, and personified the slow decline of the Towers from their illusionary glory to their final collapse.

DELTA AND THE BANNERMEN falls down because of its inconsistency of tone. The first episode is a sheer delight - after a striking opening we're thrown straight into a fairytale world where monsters disguise themselves as cheery busmen straight out of **On the Buses** to visit fifties holiday camps, where the Doctor shows (in a moment where Sylvester McCoy scores one of his first bullseyes as the Doctor) that comforting a woman in distress is far more difficult than saving the world, and Mel can be light and fun in a world as light and fun as she is. After twenty odd years of being ostensibly serious aside from the comic characters, **Doctor Who** suddenly has the "It's all a bit of game" air of **The Persuaders** and **The Avengers**, and it works. It's not the **Doctor Who** of the past, but then neither were Troughton's besieged bases, Pertwee's guns and helicopters or Tom Baker's Hammer horrors, and they all succeeded.

> "In Delta **Doctor Who** suddenly has the "It's all a bit of game" air of **The Persuaders** and **The Avengers**, and it works – for a bit."

But then it all goes wrong. The big discontinuity comes when Murray and the tourists are killed, almost unnoticed aside from Mel's by-the-numbers screams of outrage, before the story carries on as before, with jolly motorcycle chases backed by anachronistic music (Dick Barton was long demobbed by 1959) and comic characters hogging their moment of fame as if nothing had happened. It's as if Malcolm Kohll suddenly remembered this was supposed to be the serious story of the last pair for a moment, and then carried on regardless. But it's not an adventure any more, and so it all leaves a sour taste in the mouth, which isn't the best legacy for a bit of lightweight fun.

And so **Doctor Who** returns to drama with DRAGONFIRE. Shirin Taylor's character waltzes through the story as if she's walked in from **The Fast Show**, Glitz plays to the camera and the Doctor pretends to be Harold Lloyd, but the story and characters hold true to the best of old-style **Doctor Who** with an essence of something new thanks to Ace. After twenty-odd years, which had left **Doctor Who** seeming like a children's programme, when it simply reflected what was acceptable in a mainstream programme in 1963 – no sex, no drugs, no rock 'n' roll – Ace acknowledges that **Grange Hill** has happened and begins the task of putting the series back in touch with the average contemporary teenager to whom the series ought to appeal. If DRAGONFIRE is clumsy in places, that's because it reflects the end of the growing pains.

The good news is that this was year was to be the low. By the next year the new pilot would have a destination in mind, and a more experienced feel for the tiller. There'd still be some awkward moments, but a more satisfying ride was about to begin...

(Camden, London, England, Earth, Mutter's Spiral - Wednesday April 27th 1988 - 1:03pm BST)

MUTTERING UNDER HER BREATH about April showers, she bunched her hands deeper into the pockets, pulling the two sides of her badge-covered bomber jacket tighter together. Her tied back hair was plastered down by the steady rainfall and a bulging backpack, with a baseball bat poking out of it, was slung over her shoulder.

The familiar sign for a London Underground station caught her attention just before she saw a figure that could only be him. His red-handled umbrella was, unusually, being put to its proper use, shielding him from the persistent precipitation and from noticing her. It was spinning slowly, resting against his shoulder.

As she reached the corner she pulled out an apple from her right-hand pocket, called out. "Hey, Prof. Catch!" and lobbed it, underarm, in his direction. Spinning around at the sound of her voice, the Doctor nimbly caught the apple with his free hand.

"Thank you." Holding it out in the rain he gave it a rinse, "An apple a day," he began as Ace reached him, "Keeps 'The Doctor' at bay?" he emphasised, rubbing the red fruit on his jacket lapel before taking a big bite. Unable to speak with his mouth full, he indicated Ace should follow him into the cover of the station foyer, only stopping to hold the rest of the apple between his teeth while he shook out, and then furled, his umbrella. "Have you finished your shopping spree? I could always take you to the fabled markets of Hyspero or the Bazaar Bizarre on Draconia Prime."

He took another bite from the apple as Ace slipped her pack to the floor. "I'm almost done. I've managed to pick up most of the essentials, leggings, Doc Martens," Ace stuck her right elbow out in the Doctor's direction, "and a new badge. You can't beat Camden Market. I just need a quick trip to M&S and something to play my new tapes on." Pinned to the sleeve was a yellow smiley badge, but with a red splodge across the right eye.

"'Quis custodiet ipsos custodes', eh? Ace."

"Pardon, Prof."

"'Who watches the watchmen?' The image is from a recent comic book series, *Watchmen*. It's due to become something of a seminal work... If you wanted more badges, I'm sure I've got some cat ones lying around somewhere."

The look on her face told him she was not thrilled by his offer. "Well, what is it like, being back on Earth, then"

"It's a bit weird. I thought I was beginning to miss the rain, but that's well and truly passed. It's true, you can't go home again." "Of course you can, Ace." Spinning around, the tip of his umbrella landed unerringly on the Underground Map's icon for their current location.

"From here, just take the Northern Line south to Tottenham Court Road," the umbrella followed the journey, "then the Central Line to its outer reaches and there you are... Perivale."

"The only thing I want from Tottenham Court Road is a decent ghetto blaster and even two underground stations doesn't make Perivale worth visiting..."

"Well, you could always go to the other extreme, say . . ." the umbrella spun in his hand, the tip arcing away from Perivale and landing on the other side of the map "Grange Hill?"

"Now you're just taking the mick."

The Doctor looked bemused by Ace's response, taking another bite from the apple. He dropped his umbrella back to the floor and leant on it, studying the map before speaking.

"This really is an inspiring piece of design. Its disassociation dynamic can even be used as a basis for mapping the space/time vortex. And to think, if we hadn't pushed him, Harry Beck would not have re-submitted the idea. Of course, after I told him..."

Half listening to the Doctor, Ace looked around the station. Apart from a couple of staff chatting together, over by the barriers leading to the lifts, they were alone. She was glad the Doctor seemed to have lightened up a bit. After leaving Mel and Glitz on Iceworld, he had returned to his melancholy state, interrupted by periods of brooding over his ineffectiveness on Svartos. A visit to The Eye of Orion had done little to improve his mood. He had paced about even though it was supposed to be one of his favourite places. Ace had found it a little invigorating, sure, but mainly dull - a bit like the Doctor's lectures...

"...and so, after the trial period, they produced three quarters of a million copies of the 'London Electric Railway and Underground Map' in January 1933. I've got a signed copy in the TARDIS, I'll have to show you."

"That's really interesting, Prof, but why did you want to meet up here? It would have saved me a drenching if we'd met at Camden."

Spinning around, the Doctor beamed at her. "I seem to have spent a large part of my lives in, and under this city, and I've always had a soft spot for this place. I was at the opening of this station, and, although I've not yet made it to the closure in '92, I will be at the re-opening, in 10 years time." He paused while he made a sweeping gesture causing Ace to duck slightly to avoid being hit by the umbrella. "This is Mornington Crescent, Ace. You know what that means . . .?"

Ace crossed her arms, cocked her head to the left and raised her eyebrows, letting the Doctor continue. "This is the epicentre of the game made infamous by Radio 4's *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue!*," he said, thinking back to the best night of jazz Humphrey Lyttleton had ever blasted out to a half-empty audience, back in 1953.

"Don't be naff, Prof. Do I look like I listen to Radio 4? So, what's the point?"

"The point of the game is... tricky to explain, but it ends when someone gets to Mornington Crescent. The point of my coming here . . . well, that's more symbolic."

"That's nice. Are you finished being 'symbolic' then?"

"I believe so."

"Good'" Ace slung the backpack over her shoulder and headed towards the street "The rain's stopped and the bus is best, especially from here to Tee-see-arr."

"Just so long as it's not a number 22." The Doctor grumbled to himself before calling across the foyer, "Bags the upstairs front seat!" took a final bite from the apple and followed her, dropping the core into the bin. By the time he reached the pavement, she was at the Bus Stop down the road, looking at the timetable. He turned and doffed his hat at the station.

"Who mourns for Mornington Crescent, eh? As one game ends, so another begins. Only now, it's time to play by a different set of rules..."

Without looking behind him, he hooked the handle of his umbrella onto the handrail of the bus which appeared around the corner without glancing round to see if the bus was actually there. He swung himself onto the footplate of the older model Routemaster and reached up and tugged at the bellcord.

DING! DING!

The bus pulled up to the stop and Ace jumped on, smirking as she followed him up the stairs.

"Well," he shrugged, still walking backwards. "I always wanted to be a conductor!"

Andrew Stitt

CHECKLIST 4

The collected reference works

dates of first publication:
June 1983 to April 1984

 # 37 - serial GG - Jun 1983
Series Editor: Gary Hopkins
Cover art: Tony Clark

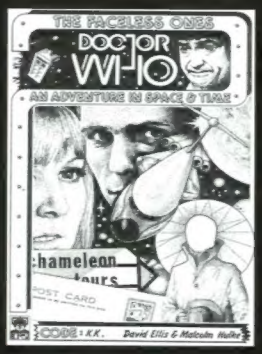
A profile of Professor Zaroff while Tim Robins' review asks if the story was meant to be played for laughs. Plus an expanded technical notes.

 # 38 - serial HH - Jul 1983
Cover art: 'Drog' Lengden

Gary Hopkins and Jeremy Bentham debate the arrival of the new-look Cybermen while Gary Russell profiles the moonbase commander, John Hobson.

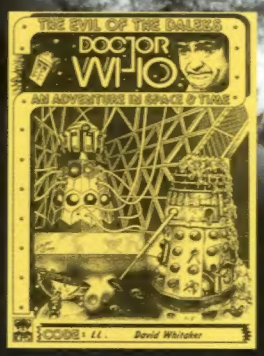
 # 39 - serial JJ - Aug 1983
Cover art: Tony Clark

Brian Hodgson interviewed on creating electronic voices and sounds for the series. Plus a reprint of the 'Radio Times' feature for 11 March



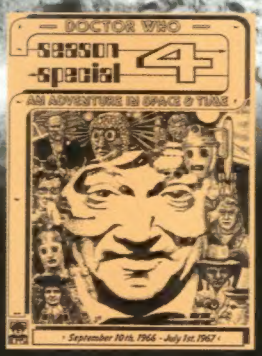
 # 40 - serial KK - Sep 1982
Cover art: Andrew Martin

Auger and Wayne profile Ben and Polly. Tim Robins wonders whether this serial was a blue-print for the future or a copy print from 'The Avengers'.



 # 41 - serial LL - Oct 1983
Cover art: 'Drog' Lengden

Gerry Davis' work for Doctor Who reviewed, plus profiles of Maxtible and Waterfield. A reprint of the 'Radio Times' feature for 20 May 1967 plus in-depth technical notes.

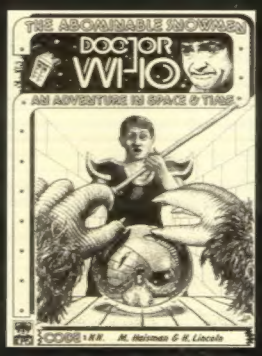


 # 42 - series 4 - Nov 1984
Cover art: Andrew Martin

Designing the title sequence, the legacy of the Daleks and the changing nature of the companions. Plus a feature article on film-shooting for Doctor Who.

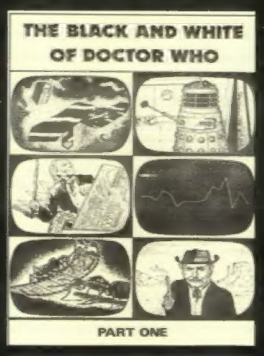
 # 43 - serial MM - Dec 1983
Cover art: 'Drog' Lengden

A feature on the first 'Talkback' TV review programme, two pages of technical notes and a reprint of the 'Radio Times' feature for 2 September.



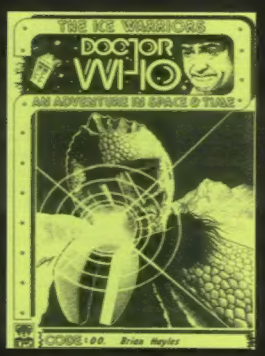
 # 44 - serial NN - Jan1984
Cover art: Andrew Martin

Illustrated with 'tele-snaps', a feature by Gary Russell reveals the design and filming of the Yeti, while Gary Hopkins questions how well North Wales fared as Tibet.



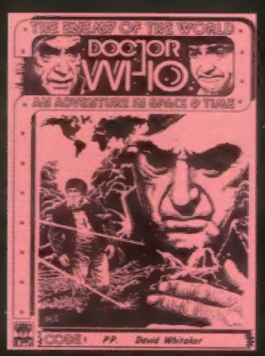
BW1 Hartnell era Jan 1984
Editor: Dave Auger
Cover art: Marc Platt

The Dalek Chronicles, the Hartnell annuals, Donald Cotton profiled and in person. Viewer Ratings and a photo-print of the wooden horse.



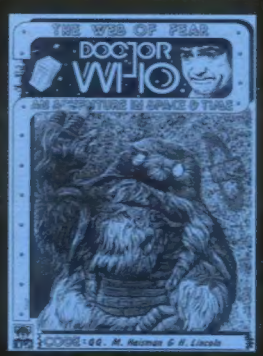
 # 45 - serial OO - Feb 1984
Cover art: 'Drog' Lengden

Paul Mount profiles Brian Hayles and Jeremy Bentham looks at the work of Costume Designer, Martin Baugh and the building of the Ice Warriors.



 # 46 - serial PP - Mar 1984
Cover art: Phil Bevan

Barry Letts on his first job for the series. Dave Auger profiles the work of Innes Lloyd, and a reprint of *The Monstrous World of Doctor Who* 'Radio Times' feature.



 # 47 - serial QQ - Apr 1984
Series Editor: Steve J. Walker
Cover art: Tony Clark

The first episode in 'tele-snaps', Gary Russell on the mark II Yeti, Trevor Wayne profiles Professor Travers, and the 3 February 'Radio Times'.

many of the titles on this checklist are now out-of print
for a list of titles in print, please send an SAE to the CMS subscription address

IN-VISION BACK ISSUES

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Paradise Towers
Delta and the Bannermen
Dragon-Fire
Season 24 Overview

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Vengeance on Varos
The Mark of the Rani
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Season 18 Overview

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SHAMELESS SELF INDULGENCE

In April 2000, CMS marked the twentieth anniversary of the publication of AN UNEARTHLY CHILD, the first issue of **IN•VISION**'s predecessor *An Adventure in Space and Time*, with our own equivalent of THE FIVE DOCTORS - the gathering of all five editors... and if you can see seven people, that's because this photo includes our equivalent of Rassilon, publisher Jeremy Bentham, and joint editors Peter Anghelides and Justin Richards who – like Hartnell and Hurndall? – shared the role of the fourth editor between them. So, from left to right... original editor Tim Robins, now a lecturer in English Literature at Cardiff University, second editor Gary Hopkins, whose work on the Granada **Sherlock Holmes** won him the Bronze Dagger crime writers' award, third editor Stephen James Walker (who looked likely to do a Tom Baker and miss the celebration, but just made it in time, to heartfelt applause), publisher Jeremy Bentham, fourth co-editor and now destroyer of Gallifrey Peter Anghelides, current editor Anthony Brown, and on the far right the other fourth editor, and now effective producer of **Doctor Who** at BBC Worldwide, Justin Richards...

MORE ABOUT DRAGONFIRE CUTS

PART ONE

The first cut was an announcement as the Doctor and Mel arrive at the freezer centre:

ANNOUNCER (OOV): Miss Kael to checkout 1012 please. Miss Kael to Checkout1012. BING-BONG.

Another announcement was also lost just after Glitz denies knowing the Doctor:

ANNOUNCER (OOV): Ladies, why not visit our Fashion Department and see our wide selection of anti-gravity lingerie?

The end of this scene was then cut:

GLITZ: Mel - think of the adventures we had together...

MEL (ANGRY): You never change, do you?

The opening lines of the next scene in the refreshment bar were also trimmed:

ACE: (INDICATING A FATUOUS LOOKING COUPLE AT A TABLE)... It's not my fault! First they asked for two strawberry milkshakes - then one strawberry milkshake and one bilberry juice - then two bilberry juices. How was I supposed to know the bimbo had changed her mind again?

ANDERSON [the barman]: And we'll have less of your insolence, young lady.

ACE: (STILL GRUMBLING) I'm not telepathic...

Midway through the scene, the Doctor originally explained his interest in the Dragon.

DOCTOR: Absolutely.

ACE: Nah - it's just tinsel, innit?

DOCTOR: That's the whole point! If we were searching after an everyday dog or rabbit, it wouldn't be half as exciting!

ACE: What - you're really going to do it?

DOCTOR: Just watch!

ACE: Cor - can I come too?

The following scene, where Kane mentions the tracking device, also lost its end.

BELAZS: As you wish.

KANE: They may even help Glitz find the treasure more speedily. And once they have located the treasure, I shall follow the tracking device to locate them.

Another announcement was lost as Ace and Mel were chucked out of Anderson's bar.

ANNOUNCER (OOV): Would customers please avoid the Upper Docking Bay, which is locked by an Icefall? Thank you. BING-BONG.

This led into a full scene cut for timing reasons, immediately after Ace used her NitroNine to clear the ice block.

(ICE PASSAGE 2B. THE DOCTOR AND GLITZ APPEAR, SLIPPING AS THEY PICK THEIR WAY THROUGH THE ICE BOULDERS)

GLITZ (MUTTERS): Oh, this is out of order - definitely out of order... (HE YELLS AS HE SLIPS ON SOME ICE). Look out!

(GLITZ GRABS AT A PROTRUDING SHAFT OF ICE AS HE FALLS. THE SHAFT OF ICE IS LOOSE, AND PULLS AWAY. A LARGE BEAM OF ICE FALLS ON GLITZ)

DOCTOR: Glitz..! (AS THE RUBBLE SETTLES, THE DOCTOR SEES GLITZ TRAPPED BENEATH THE FALLEN BEAM)

DOCTOR: Glitz - are you all right?

GLITZ: Er... Can I come back to you on that one? (GLITZ TRIES TO MOVE. HE CAN'T)

GLITZ: I seem to be stuck.

DOCTOR: Hang on...(THE DOCTOR BEGINS TO WRESTLE WITH THE HEAVY BEAM OF ICE. SUDDENLY, THE WALLS SHIFT AGAIN)

GLITZ: Look out! (THE DOCTOR FLINCHES. A RAZOR SHARP SHAFT OF ICE SLIPS, AND COMES TO REST JUST ABOVE GLITZ. GLITZ AND THE DOCTOR LOOK AT THE DANGEROUS SHAFT OF ICE, AND THEN AT EACH OTHER)

GLITZ: On the whole, I think I'd rather be losing at cards.

DOCTOR: Hang on - soon have you out of there. (THE DOCTOR STRAINS AT THE ICE BEAM ONCE MORE. HE ONLY MANAGES TO SHIFT IT A COUPLE OF CENTIMETRES)

GLITZ: You're going to do yourself a permanent, if you're not careful, Doctor.

DOCTOR (STRAINING): I said: I'd have you out of there... (THE ICE SHIFTS AGAIN, AND THE DANGEROUS SHAFT DROPS EVEN CLOSER TO GLITZ)

GLITZ (NERVOUS): What odds you offering..?

After a cutaway to Ace and Mel being captured, the sequence continues...

(THE DOCTOR IS STILL STRUGGLING WITH THE BEAM OF ICE. HE USES HIS BROLLY TO HACK AWAY AT THE ICE AND MAKE SOME HAND HOLES. GLITZ, MEANWHILE, IS ENJOYING THE REST)

GLITZ: Take your time... (THE DOCTOR GIVES HIM A LOOK. THE ICE SETTLES AGAIN. NOW THE DANGEROUS SHAFT OF ICE IS ONLY CENTIMETRES AWAY FROM GLITZ. THIS CHANGES THINGS)

GLITZ (WORRIED): Come on, Doctor - extract your digit... before I get perforated. (FINALLY, THE DOCTOR MANAGES TO HEAVE THE BEAM SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR FOR GLITZ TO SCRAMBLE OUT. AS GLITZ SCRAMBLES CLEAR, THE ICE SETTLES AGAIN. THE DANGEROUS SHAFT CRASHES DOWN WHERE GLITZ WAS LYING)

PART THREE

Reaching episode three, a major loss was the scene where Mel, Glitz and Ace play I-Spy. Cut to a single exchange onscreen, the full version ran as follows:

GLITZ: This is the life, eh..? A whole Universe out there - with all the myriad mysteries of the Cosmos - and we're sat twiddling our digits in some benighted wodge of permafrost...

MEL: We could pass the time playing a game, I suppose... 'I Spy' or something... (ACE AND GLITZ TURN TO STARE AT MEL)

MEL (LAMELY): Just a suggestion...

ACE (SIGHS): Toerag's right... I wanted some adventure... I wanted to see something exciting... Just for once in my life...

GLITZ: You know - believe it or not, but I was young once.

ACE: So was I...

GLITZ: I was a right tearaway. Thought I knew it all.

ACE: Somethings never change, do they?

GLITZ: Ah, ah... Allow an old man his moment of pregnant introspection... Where was I..?

MEL: Pregnant introspection. A right tearaway. Somethings never change.

GLITZ: Yes... Ah- the things I seen... The places I been... Me and the Good Ship 'Nosferatu' - been everywhere together... Riding on the Space Winds... Diving through the Rainbow Clouds... Nowhere to go but onwards... The Asteroid Breaks..". The Nebula Ridges... Out past the edge of the Twelve Galaxies... (ACE IS STARING AT HIM WITH WIDE-EYED ENCHANTMENT)

ACE: You've been outside the Twelve Galaxies..?

GLITZ: Me and the 'Nosferatu'... The most exquisite delights of the Universe has to offer... If only I could bottle them, I'd have a nice little earner...

The Doctor's exploration of the Ice Gardens was originally interrupted by a brief cutaway to the freezer centre...

ANNOUNCER (OOV): BING-BONG. Would the parents of Joanne Foxley, aged three, please go to the High Security Detention Compound? Thank You. BING-BONG. [The name Joanne Foxley is an in-joke reference to one of the girl's upon whom Ace was based.]

The final scene of the script, though not shot, related Ace's departure with Glitz as follows...

DOCTOR: Back to your dodgy deals, then, is it, Glitz?

GLITZ: I was thinking of renaming this spacecraft the 'Nosferatu 2'... You wouldn't care to crack a bottle of carbonated fruit alcohol over the bows, would you..?

DOCTOR: We really must dash, I'm afraid. How about you, Ace? Need a lift to anywhere?

ACE: Oh, don't worry about me... I'll be all right... Get a job somewhere...

DOCTOR: Yes... There's always jobs for waitresses. I know it's boring and tedious... But, not everybody can go exploring the Twelve Galaxies and beyond... (THE DOCTOR GLANCES AT GLITZ)

MEL: But... Doctor... (MEL LOOKS AT THE DOCTOR IMPLORINGLY. HE SEEMS NOT TO NOTICE ANYTHING)

GLITZ: Well - better go and get the engines warmed up... No doubt our paths will cross again, someday, Doctor... Mel... Ace...

ACE: Not if I can help it..! (NO-ONE LAUGHS)

GLITZ: Well... (HE LEAVES)

ACE (QUIETLY): Bye... (SHE BITES HER LIP)

DOCTOR: Well, let's be off... Look after yourself, Ace.

ACE: You too, Professor... We had some laughs, eh, Doughnut..?

MEL: Doctor..? (THE DOCTOR WHISKS MEL AWAY)

DOCTOR: Come on, Mel... (HE PROPELS HER TOWARDS THE TARDIS)

MEL: She doesn't have anywhere to go, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Who doesn't?

MEL: Ace. I just thought - maybe...

DOCTOR: Oh - I don't think we need to worry too much about her... (THERE'S A TWINKLE IN THE DOCTOR'S EYE. ACE IS WATCHING, TRYING NOT TO BURST INTO TEARS. GLITZ REAPPEARS)

GLITZ: Come on, then, Sprog... Are you going to stand about all day..? (ACE IS INDECISIVE)

GLITZ: Well? Are you coming with me and the 'Nosferatu', or not?

ACE (ACE LIGHTS UP): Ace! (SHE RUNS AFTER GLITZ)

GLITZ: But I'm in charge, understand?

ACE: Anything you say, Toe-rag... (THEY DISAPPEAR. THE DOCTOR AND MEL SMILE. THE DOCTOR OPENS THE TARDIS DOOR)

DOCTOR: After you... (THEY ENTER. THE DOOR CLOSES AS THE CHILD AND HER MOTHER APPEAR SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE ROOM)

MOTHER: Ah - there you are. I've been looking all over for you. (SHE SPOTS A SIGN) Crab Nebula Pasties, nine-ninety-five a thousand..? I expect they're past their sell-by date... (THE TARDIS DEMATERIALISES, WATCHED BY THE CHILD. THE MOTHER HAS NOT EVEN NOTICED. FADE TO TITLES)